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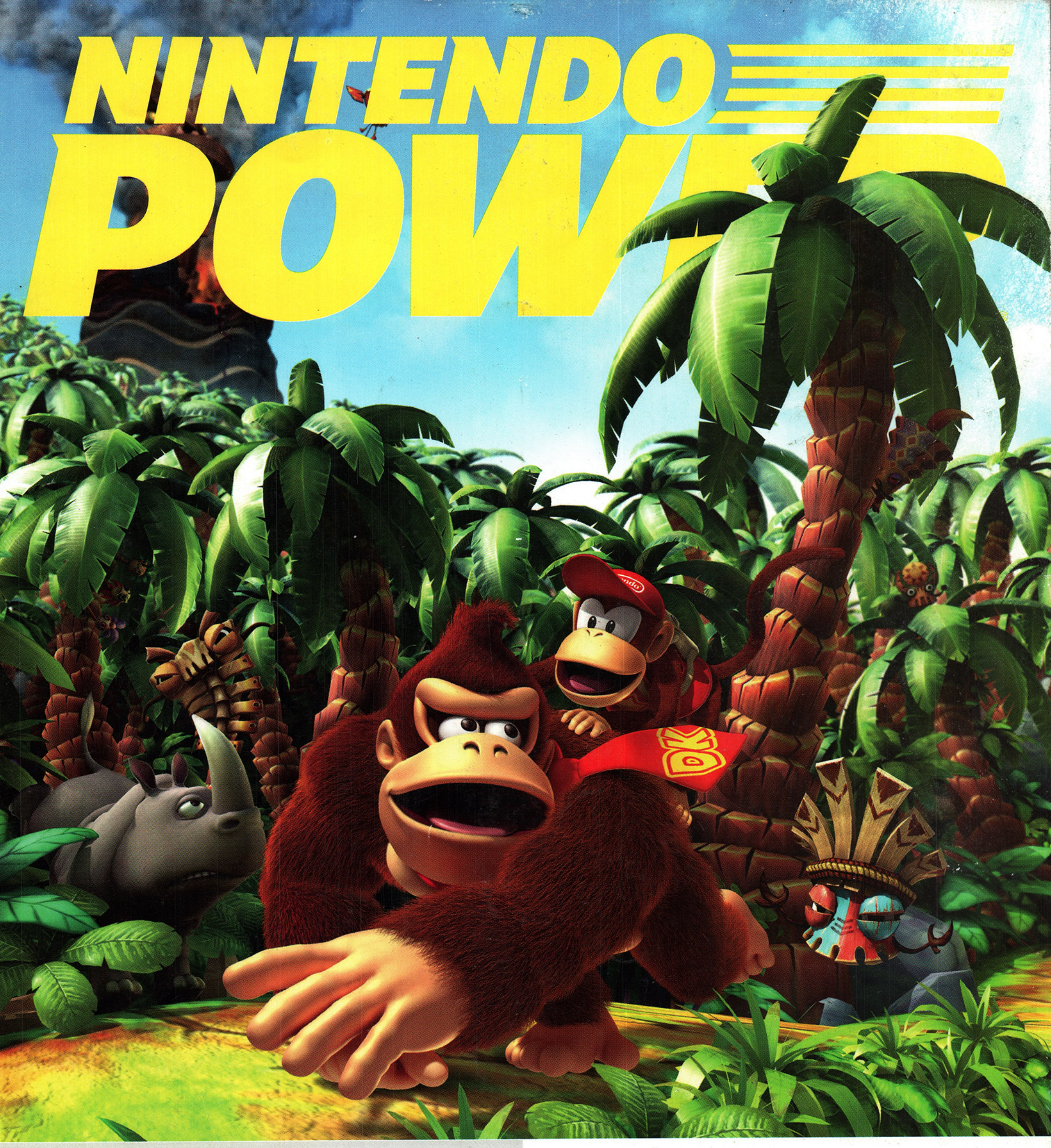

Donkey Kong Country Returns • Golden Sun: Dark Dawn • Sonic Colors • Kirby's Epic Yarn • Epic Mickey • Rock Band 3 • Super Scribblenauts • Retro City Rampage

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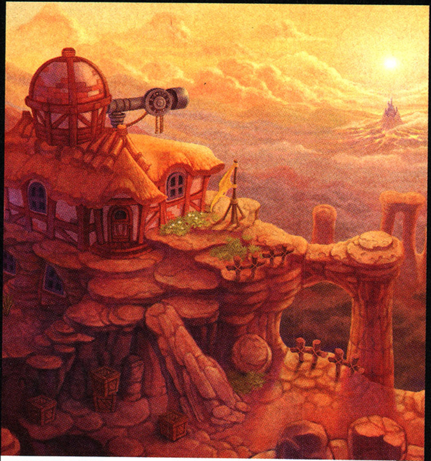
The king of the platforming jungle reclaims his throne in Donkey Kong Country Returns for Wii! Find out everything you need to know about this sure-fire smash hit.

New Horizon 60
At long last, Golden Sun: Dark Dawn is ready to shine on the Nintendo DS. Prepare for the epic journey with new details, exclusive screens, character info and more.

Game Changers 64
There are games that are great, and then there are games that redefine everything. See if you agree with NP's ranking of the 13 most influential Nintendo games ever produced!

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY RETURNS 48



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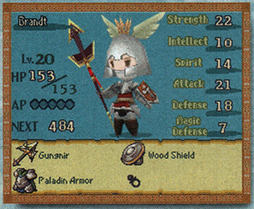

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GB = GAME BOY
N64 = NINTENDO 64
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
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Pulse

Year of the Platformer

Chris Slate

For Nintendo fans who love platformers, 2010 has turned into a banner year. As I was hopping and bopping my way through the amazing Donkey Kong Country Returns for this month's cover story, it occurred to me that the big ape will return to the genre in the same year that Super Mario Galaxy 2, Kirby's Epic Yarn, and Sonic Colors release. Altogether, that makes four future hall-of-fame platformers in just one year! While Nintendo fans can always look forward to more Mario games, it's rare to see this level of breadth and quality in the genre. And trust us; all of these titles are excellent—we gush about Kirby's Epic Yarn and celebrate Sonic's long-awaited return to greatness in this month's reviews section, and Donkey Kong Country Returns has already locked in a spot as a high-scoring featured review next issue. Snap up these games and don't take our good fortune for granted!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL!
NINTENDO POWER
25 YEARS OF NES
26-PAGE TRIBUTE
We salute the games, controllers, codes, and even the boxes behind the system that started it all!

V260 NOVEMBER 2010

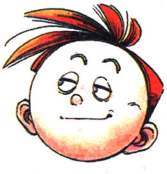
Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while eating my way through Donkey Kong's banana hoard. This month's special letter request: if you could ask any video game character one question, who would you pick and what would you ask? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

I Know That Guy!

While I was checking out Chris Slate's WarioWare D.I.Y. microgame Funky Boxing, I looked at the Action instructions and I found that the main character is named Nester! If memory serves, Nester was the longtime comic-strip star of Nintendo Power in the magazine's early days. Am I correct? —**RASH**

You got it! My original title for that game was Nester's Funky Boxing—an homage to Nester's Funky Bowling for Virtual Boy—but I settled for a generic boxer when I couldn't get Nester's hairstyle to look right. If you keep a close eye on some of the screens we run in the magazine, you'll see that we often name our characters Nester when given the chance. The little guy may not be the official NP mascot anymore, but his legacy lives on!



Nester will always have a home here at NP.

Shining Bright

Yesterday our neighborhood suffered a blackout due to hot weather. While everyone else went to find flashlights, I used my GBA SP to see! —**ASHLI T.**

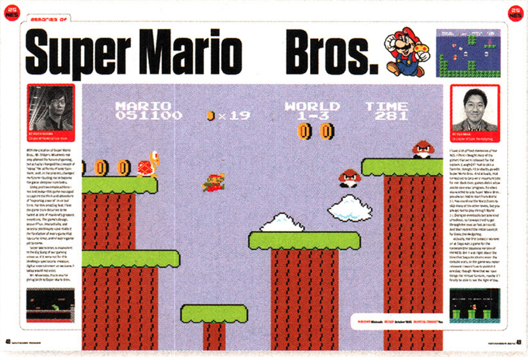
NP Survivor

I just finished reading a book about how the human race would break down and become extremely violent in an apocalyptic scenario. This sparked a discussion with my friends about which of us would survive in such a situation, and who would be eaten by their fellow travelers. (We decided that I would be eaten because I have no useful survival skills.) Who on the NP staff would be the first to go, and who would be the last survivor?

—**66DARKFIRE**

An NP intern's highest honor is to provide sustenance for the full-time writers, so those guys would go first. I would probably go next since I'm too scrawny to put up a good fight, but I wouldn't provide much meat. Finally, the starved and panic-stricken pair of Steve and Chris Hoffman would rip into each other like wild animals, and both would ultimately fall while Justin calmly watched from the shadows. This is a moot point, however, since—in the event of a zombie outbreak, alien attack, or Justin Bieber sighting—Nintendo Power headquarters is designed to transform into a Wii-Remote-shaped rocket and launch into space.

It was cool to see so many famous game developers pay homage to the classics in your NES anniversary feature. I loved reading all of their comments, but one revelation blew my mind: Yuji Naka got the idea for Sonic the Hedgehog from playing the first level of Super Mario Bros. over and over? Man, that's *huge*! **—HOGAN E.**


Memories of
Super Mario Bros.

Cover-Lover

I kid you not, when I received my November 2010 subscriber edition of Nintendo Power, I must have spent a good two hours gawking at the cover. Who knew that so many amazing memories could be packed into such a small space! No matter what anybody says, the NES is hands-down the greatest console in the history of video games. I still enjoy playing it today, and 25 years ago, the experience it provided wasn't just video gaming bliss; it was pure magic. Happy 25th, NES. *Now you're playing with power!* **—GREEN TENTACLE**

Well said, er, Green Tentacle! I'm glad that you liked that cover; we put a lot of effort into making something special just for our subscribers. How many characters were you able to name? Now that everyone has had time to make their guesses, check below to see the list of who's who.

Dedede? Really?

I was reading some older issues when I saw that Ganondorf was voted gaming's biggest jerk. This is true, but when I looked at the runners up, I was shocked to see that King Dedede beat both Bowser and Ridley! Bowser kidnaps Peach all the time, Ridley killed Samus Aran's whole family, and, uh...I don't really know what King Dedede does. **—DR. MEETI**

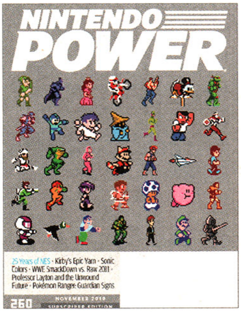
Positive Thinking

The great thing about Nintendo Power is how upbeat it is, even when you're explaining why a game you are reviewing is not the greatest. A lot of other magazines or websites would just go on and on about how bad a game is, but I always find myself in a great mood and excited for new games after reading my latest issue of Nintendo Power. **—RYAN E.**

Hogging the Ball

What's your view on the fact that the new NBA Jam is no longer a total Wii exclusive since a basic version of the game will appear on other systems? Has it changed your feelings toward the game? I feel slightly disappointed since EA had advertised it for so long as being only for Wii. Still, I feel that I will purchase this game regardless. **—FATLOUIETHEBEAST**

Although many of us love to see good games come exclusively to our favorite system, it doesn't matter much when you think about it. It's not like I won't enjoy dunking on my friends in NBA Jam just because more people can buy and play the game. Exclusives do put a nice spotlight on our community, but at the end of the day, I don't care so much what happens on other systems as long as I have plenty of great games on my Wii console.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NES Character Key

Left to right, top to bottom

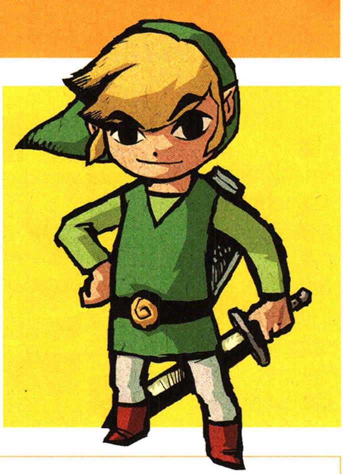
Link (Zelda II: The Adventure of Link); Batman (Batman); Princess Peach (Super Mario Bros. 2); unnamed bike rider (Excitebike); Bill Rizer (Contra); Scrooge McDuck (DuckTales); Raphael (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles); Ryu Hayabusa (Ninja Gaiden); Mega Man (Mega Man); Little Nemo (Little Nemo); Black Mage (Final Fantasy); The Amazon (Pro Wrestling); Alex (River City Ransom); Rygar (Rygar); Sir Arthur (Ghosts 'n Goblins); Rash (Battletoads); Little Mac (Punch-Out!!); Mario (Super Mario Bros. 3); Billy Lee (Double Dragon); Vic Viper (Gradius); Mike Jones (StarTropics); Rad Spencer (Bionic Commando); Samus Aran (Metroid); unnamed hero (Crystalis); Pit (Kid Icarus); Toad (Super Mario Bros. 2); Kirby (Kirby's Adventure); Simon Belmont (Castlevania); Jason (Blaster Master); duck (Duck Hunt); unnamed hero (Urban Champion); Snake (Metal Gear); Dave (Maniac Mansion); Luigi (Super Mario Bros. 2); Kuros (Wizards & Warriors)

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I was thinking of purchasing Klonoa, but then I watched a trailer for the game, and the voice acting made it sound like a game for five-year-olds. Is it still worth the purchase for people like me who can't stand annoying video game voices (like NiGHTS's voice)? **—JOSEPH H.**

The Hoff says: Joseph, I have some good news for you as well as some bad news. The good news is that Klonoa is an awesome platformer, and there's an option to turn off the English voice acting and replace it with Phantomile-speak (which is a made-up language that's reminiscent of Japanese). The bad news is that if you play the game with the charming Phantomile-speak on and you still don't like it, it means you have no soul. You'll be reduced to spending the rest of your life wandering garbage dumps alongside Chris Shepperd while slurping Labrador puppies' brains through straws. You'll have to share the straw.

Getting my appendix taken out would have to be the craziest thing I've ever done to earn a game—the good thing is that I got the The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker. —**DARK LINK**



What's the hardest, craziest, or silliest thing you've ever done to get a game?

The night before Super Smash Bros. Brawl came out, a major blizzard hit my hometown in Ohio. My buddies and I had to dig out the car (literally—it had been buried by a snow plow), and we took to the roads to make it to the midnight release. With the power of the Triforce of Courage on my side, I laughed in the face of danger as we drove on top of over a foot of snow and slid our way to the game store. Looking back, it was worth risking it all for such a great game! —**FISH IS THE LAUNDRY**

I was at an amusement park with my friend and his family when I came across an arcade machine that offered prizes if you could stack blocks without making them fall. I saw that you could win a copy of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, which I really wanted, so I kept trying and won after spending just $6. But the prize dispenser was broken, so I had to wait an hour for someone to come get my game. Total investment: $6 and 1 hour—it was worth it. —**JORDAN J.**

The hardest thing I ever did to get a video game was go to the mall at 11:00 AM and stay there the entire day waiting for Super Smash Bros. Brawl to be released at midnight. It was definitely worth it, but *good gravy*, was it boring. —**LOZFREAK**

Just about every month, I sacrifice food, clothing, and sometimes gas money to stock up on games. There have been times when I was stranded at home for a month because I spent so much on games. But the craziest thing I did was trade two brand-new Nintendo 64 games (each with box and manual) at my local GameStop for a cartridge-only copy of ECW: Hardcore Revolution. What was I thinking? That was such a horrible game. I will regret that trade until the day I die. —**JASON M.**

I had to clean my dog's kennel for six weeks to earn Super Paper Mario. —**ALEX64**

The hardest thing I've done to get a game was get out of bed at 7:00 in the morning and go outside to rake the leaves on my front lawn to earn the money I needed. My back hurt by the end, but it was worth it to get that excellent game! —**JOSEPH H.**

When I was in middle school I had no interest in video games. My brother owned an N64, and I happened to see him playing The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time one day. Needless to say, I was blown away by the game's graphics, music, and epic story. I would beg my brother to let me play, but he would refuse. I finally had to promise to do all of his chores, which I did every day for over a month just so I could beat the game! —**JEREMY S.**

The craziest thing I did to get a game occurred on May 23rd (the launch day of Super Mario Galaxy 2). I had debated on whether to buy the game when it came out or to carefully save up for it. But once its release day rolled around, I realized I needed it *that day*. I was $15 short. Panicked, I ran around the house searching for cash. Altogether I found $5, but I still needed $10. So, I begged my mom to let me do something for the money. I ended up shredding junk mail for an hour to get the amount I needed, and I bought the game later that day. It was worth it! —**RAMEN NOODLEZ**

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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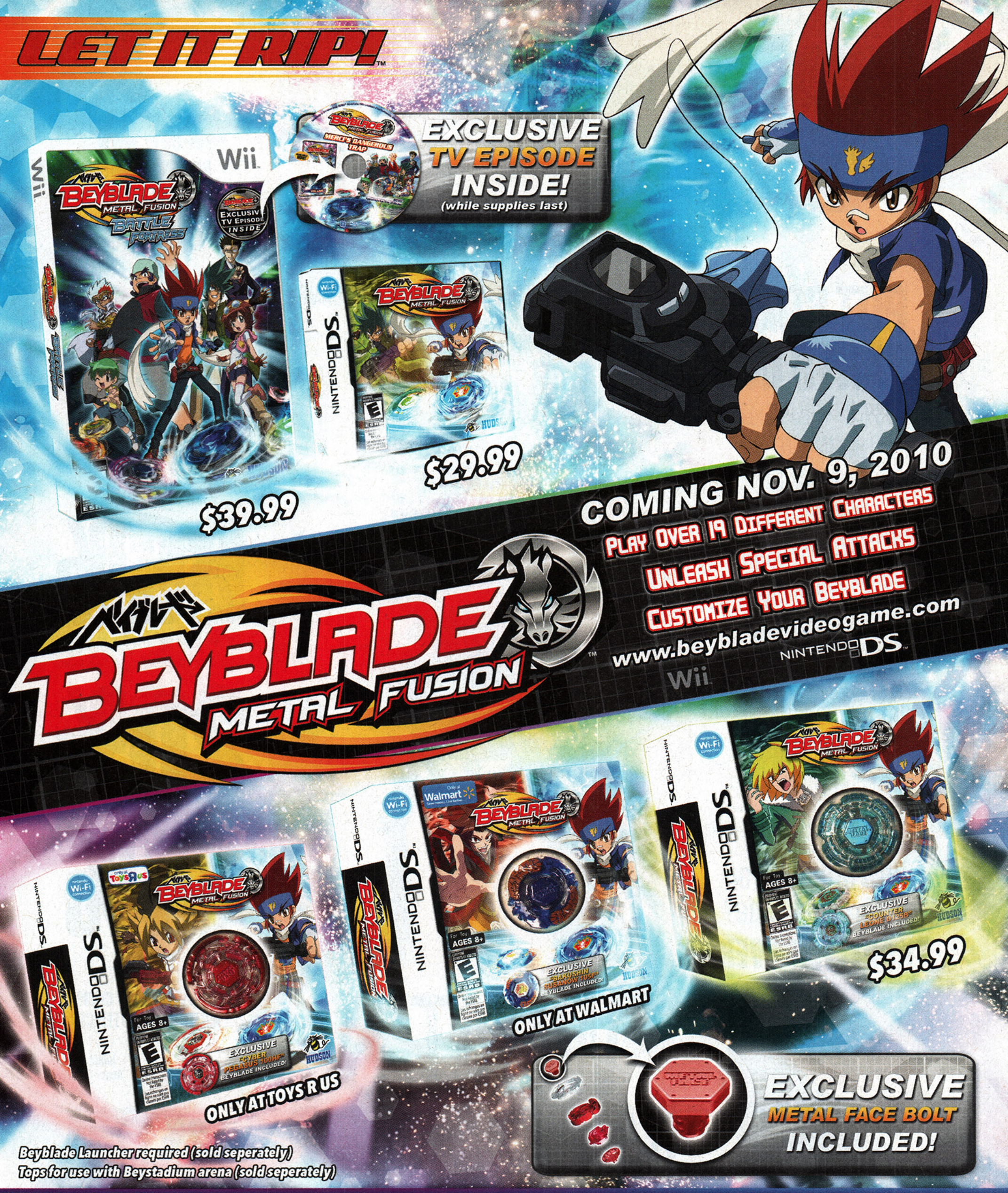
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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

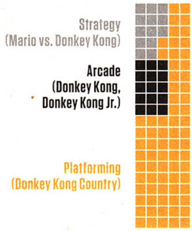
WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

PUT SOME PANTS ON!

58% OF YOU PREFER LINK IN PANTS

35% TIGHTS

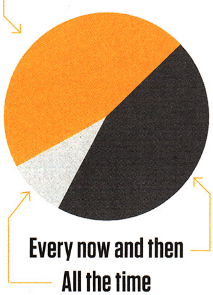
7% BARE LEGS



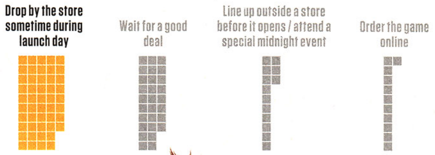
HOW DO YOU PREFER DONKEY KONG?

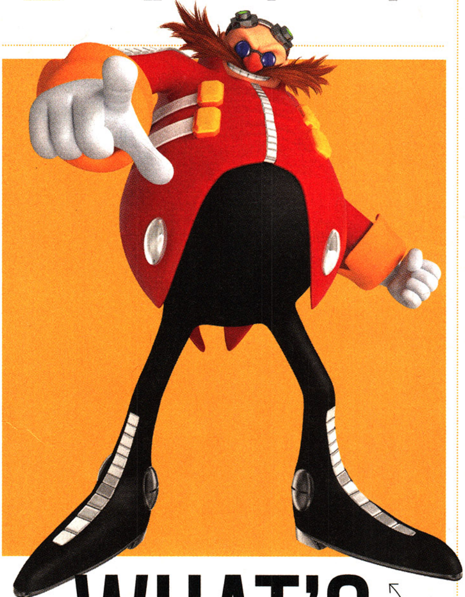
How often do you preorder a game?

RARELY, IF EVER



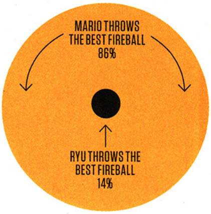
WHAT'S YOUR PREFERRED WAY TO BUY A BIG GAME?





WHAT'S MY NAME?

Dr. Eggman 67% • Dr. Robotnik 33%



66%

of you want the Star Fox series to focus on being an on-rails shooter.

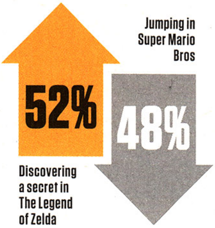
20%

adventure

14%

multiplayer

WHICH IS THE MOST CLASSIC NINTENDO SOUND EFFECT?



Raving Rabbids™
TRAVEL IN TIME
Have a Blast in the Past in this Hilarious Party Game!
1st Lap 2/3
Play in a wide range of the greatest moments in history!
Compete with up to four friends in more than 20 hilarious new mini-games.
Customize your rabbid with over 30 wacky costumes.
IN STORES THIS HOLIDAY!
VISIT: www.rabbids.com/travel-in-time
EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Alcohol Reference
Crude Humor
Mild Cartoon Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Wii
UBISOFT

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FAMILY CATEGORY

The Hooligans

St. Louis, MO 37,215 points

PARENT & CHILD CATEGORY

DrDougandConninator

St. Peters, MO 34,945 points

PARENT & TEEN CATEGORY

Mean Machine

Winnetka, IL 34,405 points

SUPER ADULT CATEGORY

McPros

Greenwood, IN 32,115 points

ADULT CATEGORY

Double Team

Saint John, IN; Lansing, IL 40,445 points

TEEN CATEGORY

Young Calves

Wheeling & Belvidere, IL 37,235 points

NINTENDO CROWNS CHAMPIONS

Wii™
Games
SUMMER 2010
GET UP AND GET PLAYING

This summer, families and friends from all over the country went head-to-head for a fun-filled gaming showdown like no other. Shopping malls and Six Flags theme parks from coast-to-coast were transformed into competitive playgrounds where thousands of teams joined us for the Wii Games: Summer 2010 tournament.

Over the Labor Day weekend, the top qualifying teams assembled in Redondo Beach, California for the Wii Games: Summer 2010 National Championships. True to the active and inclusive spirit of Wii, the finals featured players of all ages and backgrounds – all ready to grab their Wii Remote™ controllers and get into the action.

We played. We partied with Mario™. And in the end, we crowned our six team category winners.

Congratulations to this year's National Champions and special thanks to all who came out to join in on the fun at Wii Games: Summer 2010.

For more pictures and info, visit wiigames2010.com.

Featured titles:

Wii Sports Resort
Wii Fit Plus
New Super Mario Bros. Wii
Mario Kart Wii

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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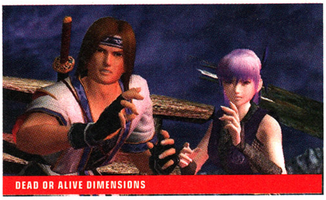
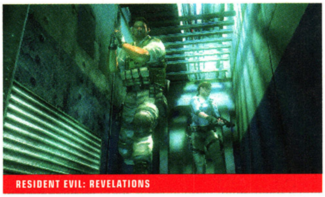
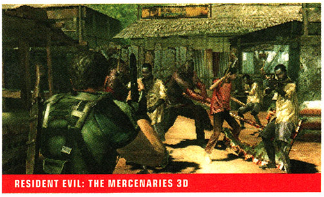
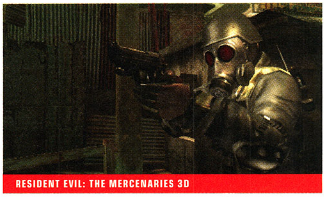

DEAD OR ALIVE DIMENSIONS


RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS


RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D


RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D

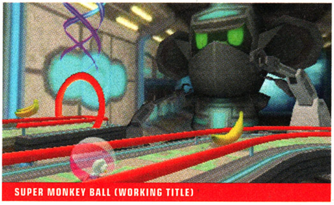
A New Dimension of Excitement

Third-party publishers unveil new games and new software details for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

AS INFORMATION about the groundbreaking Nintendo 3DS system trickles out of Japan, third-party publishers are beginning to reveal new games and provide fresh details about previously announced titles. Some of the most promising support is coming from Capcom, which has revealed that in addition to the amazing-looking Resident Evil: Revelations (check out the new screen), the company is hard at work on Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D. This second offering from the venerable survival-horror franchise collects the multiplayer Mercenaries missions from Resident Evil 4 and Resident Evil 5 and supplements them with brand-new modes and characters. Players from around the globe will be able to join forces via the handheld's Wi-Fi connectivity.

Capcom also announced Mega Man Legends 3, the long-awaited sequel to Mega Man's fan-favorite polygonal adventures. Though no details have been provided, Capcom stated that the game will allow for fan input on a level never before seen.

Meanwhile, companies have been releasing new screens and video footage for games, including Sega's Super Monkey Ball (working title) and Tecmo's Dead or Alive Dimensions. Super Monkey Ball will feature brand-new single-player puzzle levels, as well as new multiplayer modes for up to four players. Fans will also be pleased to know that they can navigate the puzzles with either the Nintendo 3DS motion sensor or the Slide Pad. Rest assured that we'll keep a close eye on these titles in the months to come. **—CHRIS H. AND STEVE T.**


SUPER MONKEY BALL (WORKING TITLE)

NEWS *from* JAPAN

Nintendo 3DS Details Revealed

Nintendo president Satoru Iwata recently revealed new details about the Nintendo 3DS, not the least of which is the machine's Japanese release date of February 26, 2011.

Under the theme of "Carry Around, Affect Each Other, Something New Every Day," Iwata announced the handheld's incorporation of Mii characters (which can be auto-created by taking a photo with the system's camera), the ability to transfer DSiWare purchases to the Nintendo 3DS, and a handheld-specific Virtual Console service for Game Boy and Game Boy Color titles such as Super Mario Land and The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX.

In Japan, the system will also come with preinstalled augmented reality (AR) games, which merge images of your surroundings with computer-created data, effectively making the world around you come to life on the Nintendo 3DS screens.

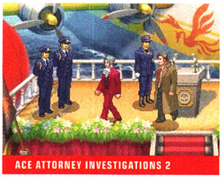
Additionally, Nintendo reaffirmed its commitment to wireless communications with its newly dubbed StreetPass mode (which lets nearby players automatically exchange data) and SpotPass mode (which lets you automatically use a Wi-Fi connection to download new game data and free software).

Iwata stated that the North American version of the Nintendo 3DS will hit in March 2011. For more info, go to www.nintendo.co.jp/n10/conference2010/presentation/index.html. **—CHRIS H.**

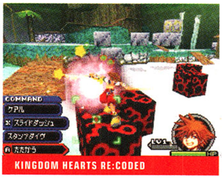
DS Still Tops in Tokyo

NEWS *from* JAPAN

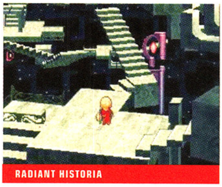
At the 2010 Tokyo Game Show, the Nintendo DS showed it still had a few tricks up its sleeve.



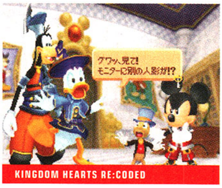
ACE ATTORNEY INVESTIGATIONS 2



KINGDOM HEARTS RE:CODED



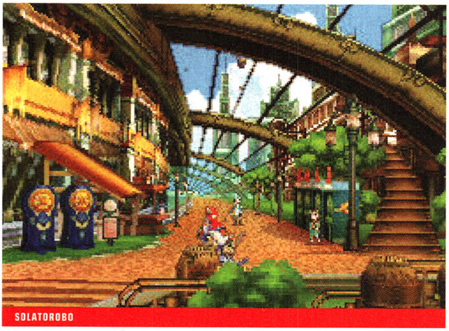
RADIANT HISTORIA



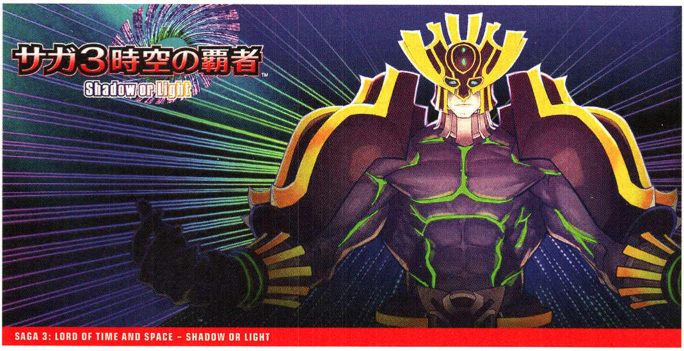
KINGDOM HEARTS RE:CODED

WITH ALL NINTENDO 3DS announcements being held for the Big N's own late-September conference, the mid-September Tokyo Game Show gave the normal Nintendo DS handheld one more chance to shine.

The biggest DS surprise of the show was Capcom's Ace Attorney Investigations 2, which had been announced only a week earlier but was already playable on the show floor. The game's opening chapter showed off hero Miles Edgeworth's new rival, stern judge Hakari Mikagami, who is better known by the nickname The Goddess of Law. Miles will need to be in top form to pass muster in her courtroom, so he's turning to a game mechanic known as Logic Chess. This new feature makes a chess-style minigame out of interrogation sequences, allowing Miles to outsmart suspects with rhetorical feints, strikes, and defenses. (No knowledge of actual chess will be required.)



SOLATOROBO



SAGA 3: LORD OF TIME AND SPACE ~ SHADOW OR LIGHT

A pair of upcoming DS releases was the main focus of Square Enix's booth. Kingdom Hearts Re:coded will soon be released worldwide, but the company is still unveiling new features in the DS version of the game (it was originally released for Japanese cell phones). Taking a page from Dragon Quest IX, Kingdom Hearts Re:coded features a unique implementation of the DS system's Tag mode, in which the avatar that players create for multiplayer minigames will automatically visit the games of other players nearby. In addition to a gift of a scratch ticket, your avatar will bring a single floor of a dungeon that has been generated based on parameters you select. The recipient's game will then combine all of the floors from all of its visiting avatars into a single dungeon of up to 100 stories tall!

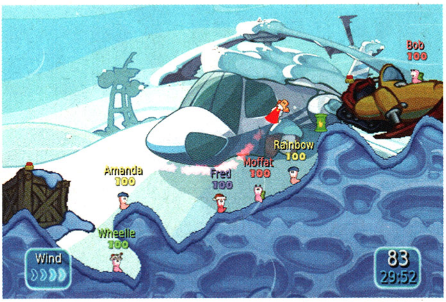
Square Enix's other title is SaGa 3: Lord of Time and Space ~ Shadow or Light, a remake of the Game Boy game we know by the more elegant title of Final Fantasy Legend III. The Game Boy title's sci-fi-flavored, time-traveling adventure was a fan favorite, but mechanically the game had little to do with the rest of the series. So unlike with last year's faithful remake of SaGa 2, Square Enix is working on a drastic overhaul that will preserve SaGa 3's story but make it play like a whole new game.

The upcoming DS slate isn't all remakes and sequels. One of the platform's most intriguing original titles is Atlus's Radiant Historia, an original RPG by the Shin Megami Tensei developers and principle members of the Radiata Stories team. Similar in concept to Chrono Trigger, Radiant Historia features ambitious time-travel mechanics that allow players to create new timelines by changing past events. Yoko Shimomura (of Kingdom Hearts fame) is composing the soundtrack.

Another under-the-radar title is Solatorobo, the spiritual sequel to 1998 PlayStation title Tail Concerto. Set in the same strangely adorable world of dog people and mechs as that earlier title, Solatorobo mixes real-time action and platforming with a light RPG structure. Solatorobo is a passion project for developer CyberConnect2, which has spent a decade trying to convince publisher Namco Bandai to let them make this game. Japanese audiences will find out if it was worth the wait—and the effort—when Solatorobo ships in late October. **—CASEY L.**

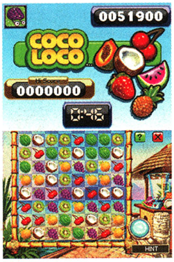
The Worms Crawl In, the Worms Crawl Out

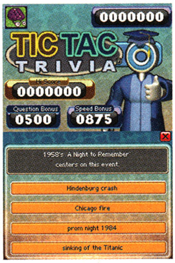
After a long wait, THQ and Team 17 deploy their adorable warriors online on Wii.


Bob
100
Rainbow
100
Moffat
100
Fred
100
Amanda
100
Wheelie
100
Wind
83
29:52

IN THE TWO-PLUS YEARS since the last Worms title (Worms: A Space Oddity) for Wii, the developers at Team 17 have been working on the one feature that was sorely missing from that game—online multiplayer. Worms: Battle Islands proffers five multiplayer modes for either online or offline action: the all-new Tactics mode, plus Deathmatch, Forts, Racing, and Triathlon. When you choose to hone your battle skills alone, you'll have 30 Campaign missions and 30 Puzzle challenges at hand, and six new environments ranging from Jungle to Chemical. Also on offer is a bevy of customization options—names, accessories (masks and backpacks), gravestones, and dances for the worms themselves, plus a level editor and even a Weapon Factory function that lets you create your own weapons from items you collect during play. Another noteworthy element is the trio of control schemes available in Battle Islands. Players who panned A Space Oddity's motion controls will welcome the ability to hold the Wii Remote controller sideways like a standard game controller, but others can take advantage of two motion-control-driven schemes (remote-only or remote-plus-Nunchuk). **—CANDACE C.**

Wind
84
29:48


0051900
COCO LOCO
Hi-Score
0000000
0:46
HINT


0000000
TIC TAC TRIVIA
Hi-Score
0000000
Question Bonus
0500
Speed Bonus
0875

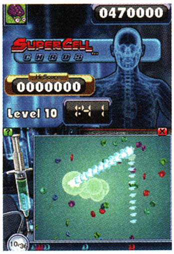
1958's A Night to Remember centers on this event.

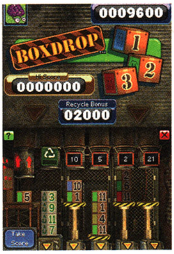
Hindenburg crash

Chicago fire

prom night 1984

sinking of the Titanic


0470000
SUPERCELL CHAOS
Hi-Score
0000000
Level 10


0009600
BOXDROP
1
2
3
Hi-Score
0000000
Recycle Bonus
02000
Take Score

A Touching Display of Connectivity

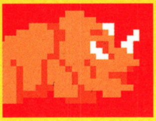
What's a few minigames between friends?

WB GAMES WILL BRING TouchMaster Connect, a grab bag of online-aware minigames, to DS this holiday season. The 20 casual-play offerings are divided into four thematic groups—puzzle, card, strategy, and action—and sport both single- and multiplayer flavors. (Multiplayer will be handled via DS System Swap and limited DS Download Play.) Games range from the familiar (Spider Kings, a twist on Spider Solitaire) to the bizarre (Tricky Fish, in which your goal is to "bounce" a puffer fish in the air while avoiding hungry pelicans).

Of course, the panoply of games is only half the story; WB Games hopes to really hook players with the game's "Connect" features. First up? Leaderboards, of course. Scores that do you proud can be posted online, where all-time and weekly score charts are maintained. You can also view your rank amidst the worldwide gaming throng.

More interestingly, TouchMaster Connect will bring social-network integration to the DS; players with Facebook or Twitter accounts will be able to post game-related status updates directly from the game. And yes, your friends most certainly do want to know (immediately!) if you execute a particularly heroic round of puffer-fish bouncing. **—PATRICK C.**

A WINNER IS...
Shantae—her DSiWare game is finally out!

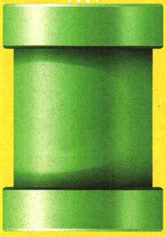


DODONGO DISLIKES...
Late-summer heat waves.

WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

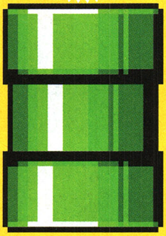
5 YEARS AGO

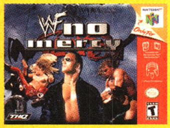


ON THE WAR PATH

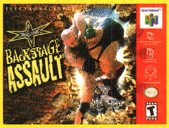
Can you believe it's been five years since Nintendo president Satoru Iwata unveiled the revolutionary Wii Remote controller? It's true—and Nintendo Power was there to give its hands-on impressions. Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance, Gun, and Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones were among the issue's biggest games, and the countdown to issue 200 continued with an article that ranked Donkey Kong Country as the 90th best game ever. Also: The Hoff made his NP debut!

10 YEARS AGO



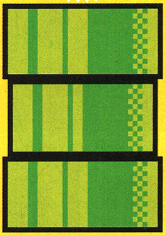

WWF No Mercy
THQ

VS.


Backstage Assault

Fans of anthropomorphic animals that speak in unintelligible gibberish assuredly loved the December 2000 cover story on N64 platformer Banjo-Tooie. On the other hand, fans of big, muscular dudes who speak in unintelligible gibberish probably enjoyed the no-holds-barred wrestling feature that compared WWF No Mercy to WCW Backstage Assault.

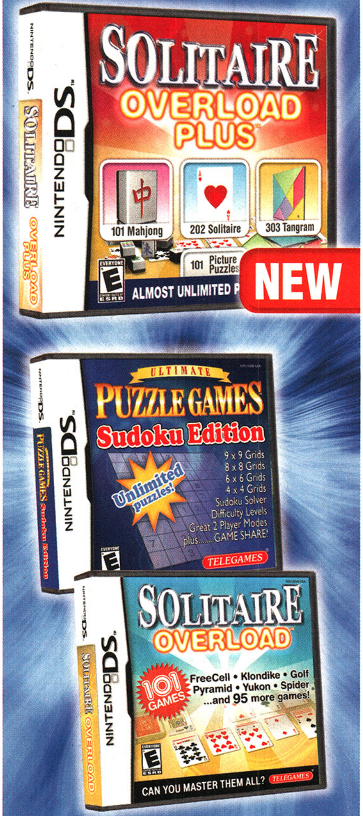
20 YEARS AGO



Nintendo Power Library Reference Copy
STRATEGY GUIDE
NINTENDO POWER
4-PLAYER EXTRA
Team up for powerful fun!
Nintendo

Nintendo Power continued its experiment with bimonthly strategy guides, but instead of focusing on a single game, Volume 19 was a "4-Player Extra" covering several four-player NES games such as Super Spike V'Ball, Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's Super Off Road, and Spot: The Video Game. Considering the issue featured tips like "don't oversteer into the wall," it's no surprise that this was the final bimonthly dedicated strategy issue.

Virtually Unlimited Entertainment


SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD PLUS
101 Mahjong
202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
101 Picture Puzzles
NEW
ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES Sudoku Edition
Unlimited puzzles!
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD
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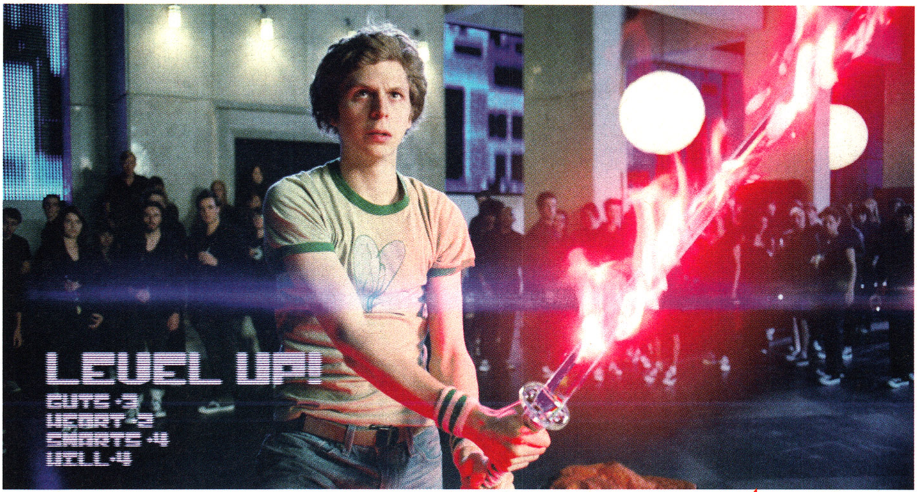


Scott Pilgrim Loves Nintendo

Our favorite scenes from the film that every video game fan should see.

IF YOU MISSED *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* in theaters, we highly recommend that you catch it on Blu-ray or DVD when it comes home on November 9th. We normally don't discuss movies here in the pages of Nintendo Power, but this one packs in so many video game cameos that counting them is almost a game in itself! (How can you not love a flick that includes tunes from The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past in its score?) Just for kicks, here are our 10 favorite video game references from the film. **—CHRIS S.**

1 Level Up

When Scott steps up his game during a pivotal scene, he goes up a level and his stats increase. He also gets a badass flaming sword.

2 Ninja Ninja Revolution

Clearly a nod to Dance Dance Revolution, this fictional arcade game features cool co-op ninja fighting instead of dancing.

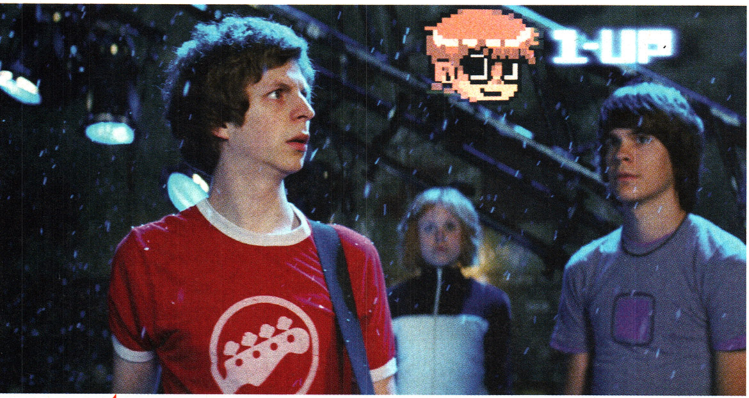
4 Coins

Scott's foes explode into coins and points when defeated. Strangely, nobody seems to mind much.

3 Bob-omb

Scott's band is called Sex Bob-omb, which is a riff on the Mario enemy Bob-omb. You can even see a little bomb character on Kim's drum set.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME ENTERTAINMENT.



5 Extra Life

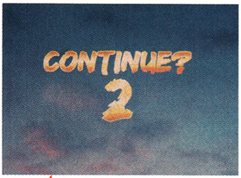
When Scott decides to "get a life," he does so literally by snagging a classic-style 1-up icon from the air. Eagle-eyed gamers will also notice that the guitar logo from Rock Band is on his shirt.

6 Nega Scott

Just as Link and many other video game heroes have done, Scott has to face his dark mirror self.

7 Clash at Demonhead

This band, headed by Scott's heartless ex-girlfriend, is named after an obscure NES game. Another of Scott's rival bands, Crash 'n' the Boys, also gets its name from an NES title.



8 Continue?

In a film so infused with the imagery and language of gaming, you just knew this video game staple would turn up.

CLASH AT DEMONHEAD
FEATURING "You Suck" and "Stop Calling Me" THE HIT SINGLES

9 Double Dragons

Is it a coincidence that a pair of twins attacks Scott with double dragons? The twins aren't named Billy and Jimmy Lee, but the serpentine dragons definitely recall a certain 8-bit beat-'em-up.

10 Combos

Fights are staged like epic video game brawls; they begin when "VS" appears on the screen and end with a Street Fighter-esque shout of "KO!" Hits are even tallied via a combo counter.

STAR POWER

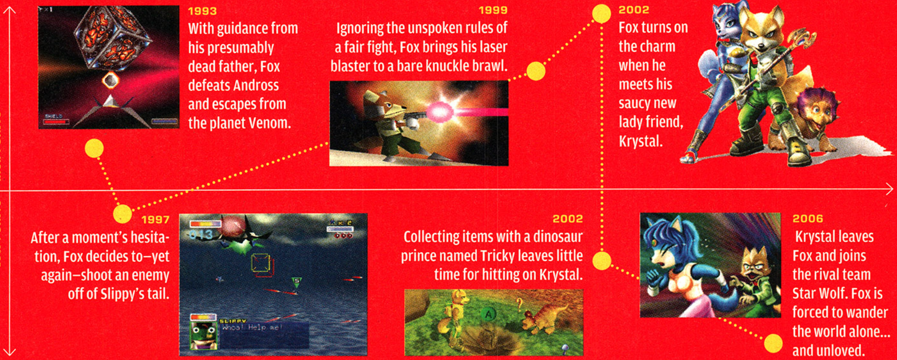
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
STAR FOX
SUPER NES, 1993

Fox McCloud

When a giant, disembodied gorilla head is threatening your galaxy, you need to call a professional. You need to call Fox McCloud.

CAREER GRAPH



1993 With guidance from his presumably dead father, Fox defeats Andross and escapes from the planet Venom.

1999 Ignoring the unspoken rules of a fair fight, Fox brings his laser blaster to a bare knuckle brawl.

2002 Fox turns on the charm when he meets his saucy new lady friend, Krystal.

1997 After a moment's hesitation, Fox decides to—yet again—shoot an enemy off of Slippy's tail.

2002 Collecting items with a dinosaur prince named Tricky leaves little time for hitting on Krystal.

2006 Krystal leaves Fox and joins the rival team Star Wolf. Fox is forced to wander the world alone... and unloved.

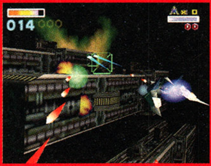
OUR FAVORITE FOX McCLOUD GAMES

STAGE- 1
SHIELD
ALL SHIPS CHECK IN!!

Star Fox

SUPER NES, 1993

In Fox's first adventure, he takes command of the new Star Fox team after the original squad (that was led by his father) was defeated by the villainous ape Andross.



Star Fox 64

NINTENDO 64, 1997

This is essentially a retelling of the original Star Fox game, but it introduces Fox's chief rival Wolf O'Donnell and Wolf's team, Star Wolf.

Star Fox Command

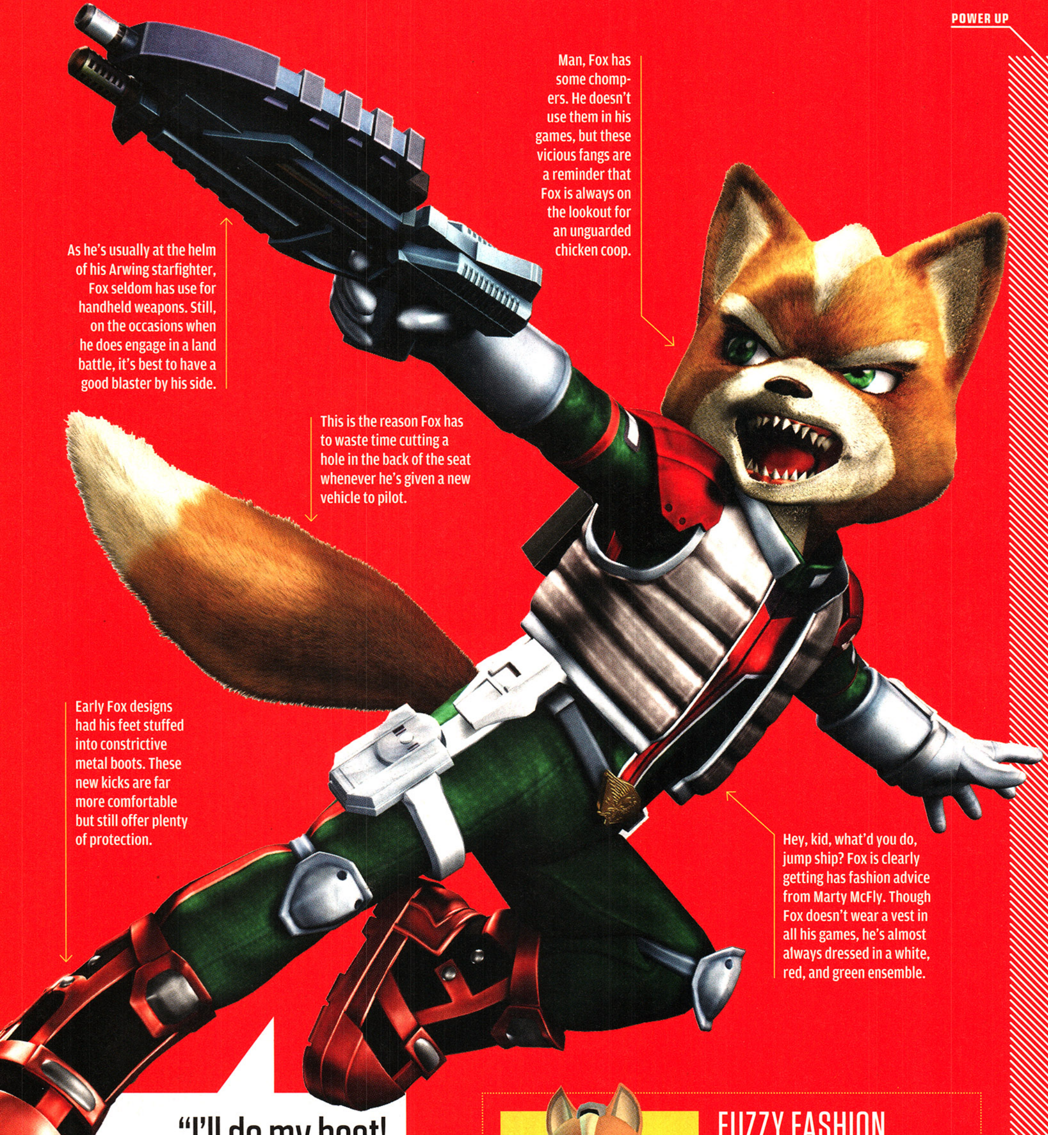
NINTENDO DS, 2006

Based on the player's decisions during gameplay, Fox's life can have wildly different outcomes thanks to this game's multiple endings. This makes for some great replay value.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Wii, 2008

Fox has appeared in all three Super Smash Bros. titles, but he plays an especially large role in Brawl's Subspace Emissary mode. There he teams up with Diddy Kong to rescue Donkey Kong.



Man, Fox has some chompers. He doesn't use them in his games, but these vicious fangs are a reminder that Fox is always on the lookout for an unguarded chicken coop.

As he's usually at the helm of his Arwing starfighter, Fox seldom has use for handheld weapons. Still, on the occasions when he does engage in a land battle, it's best to have a good blaster by his side.

This is the reason Fox has to waste time cutting a hole in the back of the seat whenever he's given a new vehicle to pilot.

Early Fox designs had his feet stuffed into constrictive metal boots. These new kicks are far more comfortable but still offer plenty of protection.

Hey, kid, what'd you do, jump ship? Fox is clearly getting has fashion advice from Marty McFly. Though Fox doesn't wear a vest in all his games, he's almost always dressed in a white, red, and green ensemble.

> "I'll do my best! Andross won't have his way with me!"

STAR FOX 64, NINTENDO 64, 1997

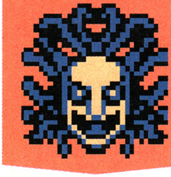
FUZZY FASHION

In nearly all of the Star Fox games (Star Fox: Assault is the lone exception), Fox wears a red scarf around his neck. Perhaps this is a reference to the Japanese fox spirit Inari Okami, which inspired Shigeru Miyamoto's original design of Fox. Fox statues in Inari shrines are often decorated with red bibs.

POWER QUIZ

EASY

Who is this enemy from Konami's Castlevania for the NES?

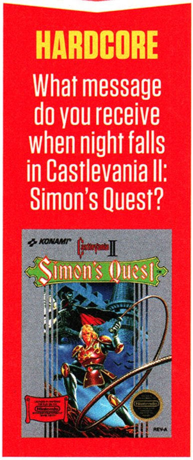


AVERAGE

What is the name of the famous Belmont family whip?

HARDCORE

What message do you receive when night falls in Castlevania II: Simon's Quest?

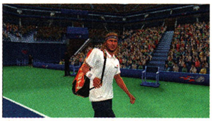


ANSWERS

EASY: Medusa; AVERAGE: Vampire Killer; HARDCORE: "What a horrible night to have a curse."

Service with a (Realistic) Smile

2K returns to the courts with Top Spin 4.



TENNIS-SIM FANS have new hope on the horizon. (We're still waiting for a great tennis game, are we not?) 2K Sports is prepping its latest bid, Top Spin 4, for a 2011 release. Providing a potential antidote to the Wii console's endless stream of racket-themed party games, 2K is upping the realism factor for true fans of the sport, starting with "uncanny" (according to 2K) depictions of players and stadiums. Audio captured from real-life matches and an all-new, innovative control scheme should further enhance the sense of "being there."

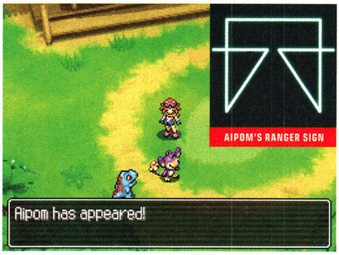
Other notable (but vague, as yet) features include a deep roster of current and legendary players (fingers crossed for a bile-spewing, 'fro-sporting McEnroe), Signature Style player animations that distinguish one pro from the next, and TV-inspired presentation elements. (Let's hope that last part isn't code for "commercials.") **—PATRICK C.**

With audio captured from real-life matches, we expect to hear lots of grunting.

Secret Signs

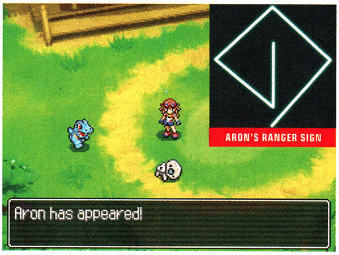
Times may be tough in Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs, but help is on the way.

ONE OF THE COOLEST features in the recently released Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs is the ability to call upon various Pokémon for help by drawing Ranger Signs. This may be old news to die-hard Pokémon fans, but did you know that not every Ranger Sign can be learned by just playing the game? We've snagged two Hidden Ranger Signs for you that will summon the Pokémon Aipom and Aron. You can try them out once you've unlocked the ability to have a partner Pokémon in multiplayer missions. No need to thank us—we're just doing our part to stop those pesky Pokémon Pinchers and bring peace back to the Oblivia region. **—CHRIS S.**



AIPOM'S RANGER SIGN

Aipom has appeared!



ARON'S RANGER SIGN

Aron has appeared!

ENORMOUS
COLORFUL
EXCITING
SUPERSONIC
ANGRY
ELECTRIFIED
UNDEAD
INVINCIBLE
INSANE
SHINY

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Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB
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Comic Mischief
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

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It's About Time

It's been 15 years since the original Super NES release of Chrono Trigger, and we're finally getting some cool toys. The full set of four super-detailed dioramas will be available in October.

Cool Karts

For about five bucks a pop, you can't go wrong with these Mario Kart toys. You can pull the karts back to make them zip forward, but they're still plenty neat to look at when parked on a desk or shelf.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

A TOTAL WIN FOR NARUTO FANS

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Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at
www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Kirby's Epic Yarn
3. Epic Mickey
4. Donkey Kong Country Returns
5. Sonic Colors

NINTENDO DS

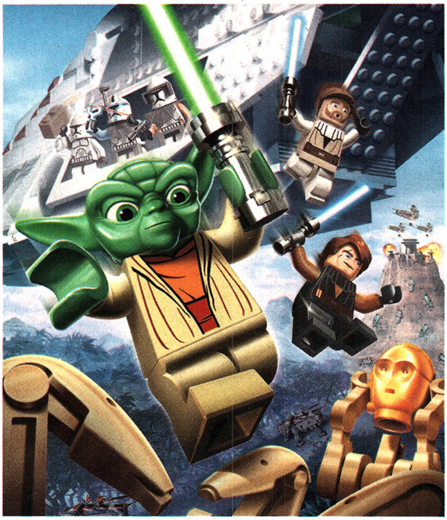
1. Pokémon Black Version/ Pokémon White Version
2. Super Scribblenauts
3. Sonic Colors
4. Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!
5. Kingdom Hearts Re:coded

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. Mario Kart*
3. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
4. Kid Icarus: Uprising
5. Star Fox 64 3D

Wii

Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader? Back to School	THQ	11/10
Bakugan: Defenders of the Core	Activision	11/10
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	11/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Beyblade: Metal Fusion—Battle Fortress	Hudson	11/10
The Biggest Loser Challenge	THQ	11/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro: Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
Conduit 2	Sega	Q1 11
Create	Electronic Arts	11/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Deadliest Catch: Sea of Chaos	Crave	11/10
Donkey Kong Country Returns	Nintendo	11/10
Dood's Big Adventure	THQ	11/10
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	Q4 10
EA Sports Active 2	EA Sports	11/10
EA Sports Active NFL Training Camp	EA Sports	11/10
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	11/10
Family Feud Decades	Ubisoft	11/10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Heathcliff: The Fast and the Furriest	Storm City	11/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Jillian Michaels Fitness Ultimatum 2011	D3Publisher	11/10
Just Dance Kids	Ubisoft	11/10
Karaoke Revolution Glee	Konami	11/10
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	2011
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2011
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	1/11
Man vs. Wild	Crave	11/10
Mario Sports Mix	Nintendo	2011
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	11/10
Megamind: Mega Team Unite	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	Atlus	11/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nickelodeon Fit	2K Play	11/10
Pac-Man Party	Namco Bandai	11/10
Pictionary	THQ	11/10
Pro Evolution Soccer 2011	Konami	11/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Raving Rabbids Travel in Time	Ubisoft	11/10
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	TBA
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	11/10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	11/10
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	Ubisoft	11/10
Top Spin 4	2K Sports	2011
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	Disney	12/10
uDraw Studio	THQ	11/10
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Worms: Battle Islands	THQ	11/10
WWE All Stars	THQ	2011
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10



NINTENDO DS

Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	THQ	11/10
Bakugan: Defenders of the Core	Activision	11/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Beyblade: Metal Fusion	Hudson	11/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dora the Explorer: Dora's Cooking Club	2K Play	11/10
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove	Natsume	Q4 10
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	Capcom	2011
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Go Diego Go Mega Bloks Build and Rescue	2K Play	11/10
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	Nintendo	11/10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Imagine Fashion Stylist	Ubisoft	11/10
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	Activision	11/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	Square Enix	2011
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2011
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	Nintendo	11/10
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	11/10

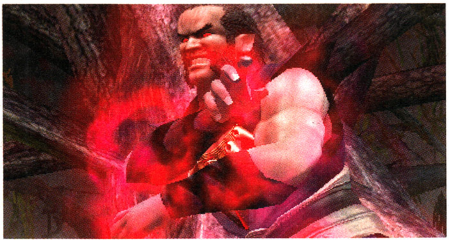
Stop the park from being turned into a housing site! Protect the park, the rock of the gods!

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

Megamind: The Blue Defender	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Monster Tale	Majesco	2011
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	Atlus	11/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	Aksys	11/10
Okamiden	Capcom	3/11
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	11/10
Petz Nursery 2	Ubisoft	11/10
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Plants vs. Zombies	PopCap	1/11
Pokémon Black Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon White Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	Natsume	11/10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	11/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
TouchMaster Connect	Warner Bros.	HOL 10
TRON: Evolution	Disney	12/11
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Worms: Battle Islands	THQ	11/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10

NINTENDO 3DS

Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Asphalt GT	Gameloft	TBA
Assassin's Creed Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	TBA
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
Bomberman*	Hudson	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
cubic ninja	AQ	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dead or Alive Dimensions	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Racers: Photo Finish	Majesco	TBA
FIFA Soccer*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger*	Konami	TBA
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Hollywood '61*	Ubisoft	TBA
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	TBA
Kingdom Hearts 3DS*	Square Enix	TBA
Kororinpa*	Hudson	TBA
Kung Fu Panda Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Madden NFL*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	TBA
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	TBA
Mega Man Legends 3	Capcom	TBA
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	Konami	TBA
My Garden	Electronic Arts	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action	Tomy	TBA
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Nintendogs + Cats	Nintendo	TBA
Pac-Man & Galaga*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
PilotWings Resort	Nintendo	TBA
Pro Evolution Soccer*	Konami	TBA
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	Capcom	TBA
Resident Evil Revelations	Capcom	TBA
Ridge Racer*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Saints Row: Drive-By	THQ	TBA
Samurai Warriors 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Sonic*	Sega	TBA
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Steel Diver	Nintendo	TBA
Super Monkey Ball*	Sega	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition*	Capcom	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	TBA
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	TBA
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA



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MDK2

DSiWARE PREVIEW
Clay Fighter: Call of Putty

WiiWARE PREVIEW
FAST Racing League

WiiWARE FEATURE
The Characters of Retro City Rampage

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Fluidity

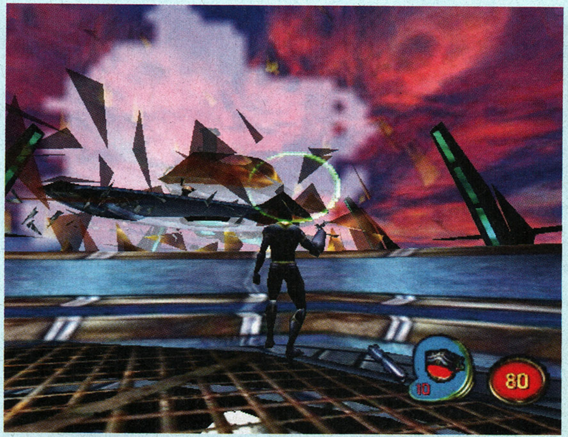
WiiWARE REVIEWS
ADVENTURE ON LOST ISLAND—HIDDEN OBJECT GAME
FENIMORE FILLMORE "THE WESTERNER"
TALES OF ELASTIC BOY—MISSION 1
THRUSPACE
TRIPLE THROWING SPORTS

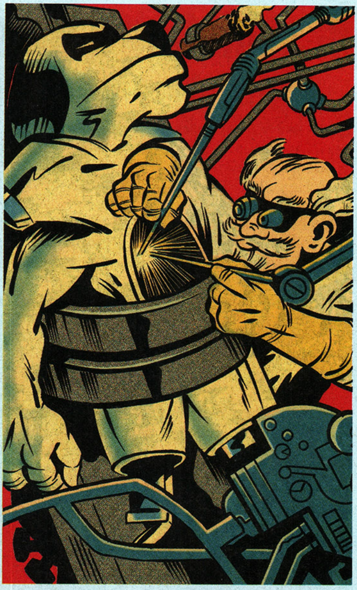
VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
AERO THE ACROBAT 2
SAMURAI SHODOWN III

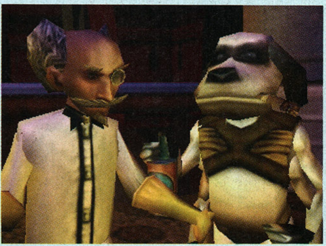
DSiWARE REVIEWS
CASTLE CONQUEROR
COSMOS X2
CRAZY PINBALL
EVERYDAY SOCCER
GO SERIES 10 SECOND RUN
MY EXOTIC FARM
SIMPLY MAHJONG

Blast from the Past

Fan favorite MDK2 comes to WiiWare with its action and humor intact—plus a fresh coat of pixels.







If you love mutant cyborg dogs, you'll love MDK2.

IT'S BEEN MORE than a decade since the birth of the MDK third-person action franchise, and no one seems any closer to divining what those three letters stand for. Now MDK2, the sequel that debuted on PC, Sega Dreamcast, and PlayStation 2, is destined for downloadable release on WiiWare—from a developer that *should* know what the title means.

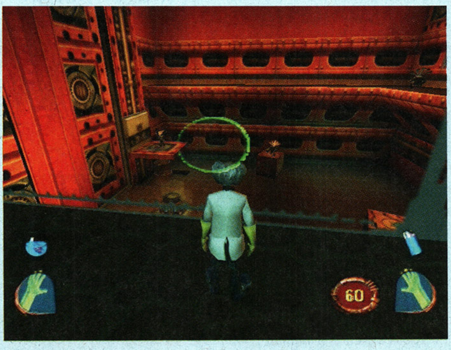
"As far as the acronym, I always went with Max Doctor Kurt," says Cameron Tofer, producer on the resurrected release at Beamdog. Tofer, who worked as a programmer on the original MDK2 release from RPG powerhouse BioWare, is referring to the game's three distinct protagonists, who are on a mission to save Earth from alien invaders led by Schwang Schwing.

There's Kurt Hectic, who's all about taking enemies out from afar using speed, an unusual cape (for gliding), stealth, and his helmet—which is also a sniper rifle. This star of the original MDK is joined by a super-intelligent dog, Max, whose gameplay focuses on pure firepower. The six-legged canine has the ability to wield four weapons at once. (He's also got a jet pack, so his levels are the most vertical of any character's.) Doctor Hawkins is the brains of the operation, and his levels focus on puzzle-solving, combining unusual items to make zany weapons (nuclear leaf blower, anyone?), plus some traditional platforming. Like the original MDK 2, the WiiWare version will feature three different endings, depending on which character you use to defeat the final boss.

"This project has been a perfect storm for us...MDK2 is a great game that deserves to be played again," says Tofer. "When the opportunity came up it was a no-brainer since I had been thinking about it already." Specifically, Tofer and Beamdog were thinking about how the game could play—and look—on a current console like Wii. "The first obvious difference will be the controls. They feel smooth and responsive, it's a better experience [than with a traditional] controller," he tells us. "You aim the camera with the remote, then move with the Nunchuk. We're going to be modifying Kurt's sniper gun slightly to be nice and responsive. In the end it will react much faster than the controller versions."

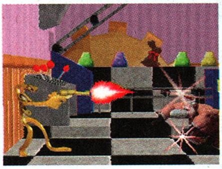
Tofer continues, "We're also improving the graphics, and once we're finished the game should look brighter and more detailed." MDK 2 is a dark comedy from a story standpoint, and the original release's visuals followed that theme—really moody and dark. The gameplay takes you to a dizzying array of locales, from the opening sequence of Kurt "space-diving" from orbit over Canada to an alien spacecraft and eventually to the strange climes of the planet Swizzle Firma. We can't wait to see what these crazy environments—and their equally weird enemies—will look like once the Wii visuals are finished.

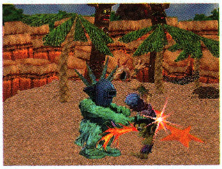
Tofer believes aficionados of the original MDK2 and new players alike will take pleasure in the WiiWare remake. For newbies, he views the title as "a really cool, funny, challenging game to earn [your] stripes as a game player." And he expects that gamers with fond memories of the original will notice and appreciate the work he and his team are doing. "This version is going to be great for old fans. Simply put, it's going to play and look better," he promises. Plus, he teases, "There are some original secrets that haven't been found yet. Maybe this time around someone will." **—RANDY N.**



Resculpting a Classic

Interplay remolds Clay Fighter for DSiWare.

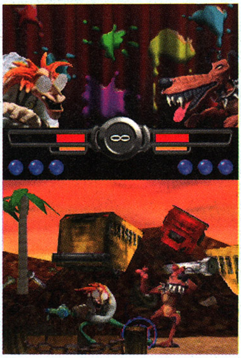




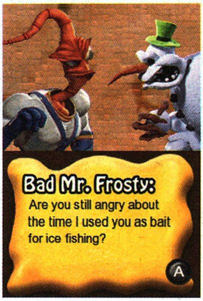
ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTING games are making a comeback. Super Street Fighter IV is poised to hit big on the upcoming Nintendo 3DS handheld, Mortal Kombat is turning heads once again, and now the craziest fighting game of them all—Clay Fighter—is making a return on DSiWare in the form of Clay Fighter: Call of Putty.

Basically an updated version of Clay Fighter 63 1/3 for the Nintendo 64, Clay Fighter: Call of Putty has all the features that made the series a cult hit in the 1990s: digitized clay characters, loads of goofy special moves, and personality out the wazoo. You can choose from 16 bizarre fighters, including Bad Mr. Frosty (an evil snowman), Kung Pow (an eternally hungry martial artist), High Five (a giant hand), Bonker (a deranged clown), Lady Liberty (the Statue of Liberty come to life), and Sumo Santa (a morbidly obese Santa Claus). Heroes from other Interplay titles—Boogerman and the ever-popular Earthworm Jim—even appear as playable characters. Each wacky clay warrior comes complete with standard punches and kicks (available in three strengths each), special attacks (such as projectiles), powerful meter-based supermoves, and finishing moves dubbed Claytalities. There's a lot to master, but a thorough training mode will let you learn the necessary skills.

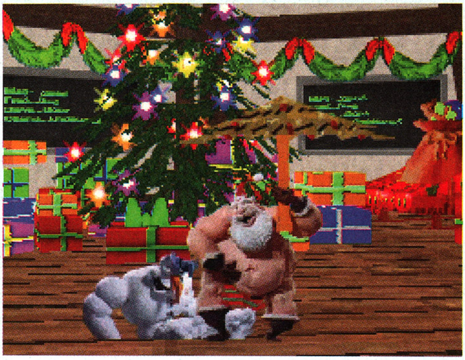
In addition to a single-player Story mode (which features the ability to save your progress), Clay Fighter: Call of Putty includes exhibition matches and a robust two-player versus mode. Publisher Interplay hopes the game will be available for download in late 2010 or early 2011. —**CHRIS H.**

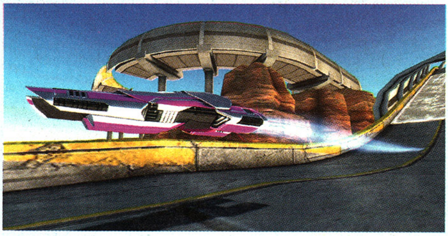


[Below] The Clay Fighters love to talk trash before they battle.



Bad Mr. Frosty:
Are you still angry about the time I used you as bait for ice fishing?





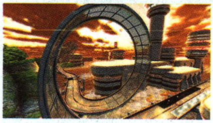
Racing to the Dark Side

FAST Racing League shifts onto WiiWare.

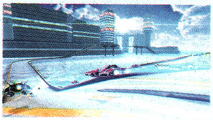
THE LATEST GAME from Shin'en (makers of the WiiWare fave Jett Rocket) mixes high-speed racing à la Wipeout or F-Zero with play mechanics you might remember from cult action hits like Ikaruga. FAST is a futuristic hover-ship racer—familiar enough so far—but in this case it's not quite enough to just floor it and air-brake through the turns. Your ship can also shift through two "phases" of the track, which adds a whole new layer of challenge to each circuit.

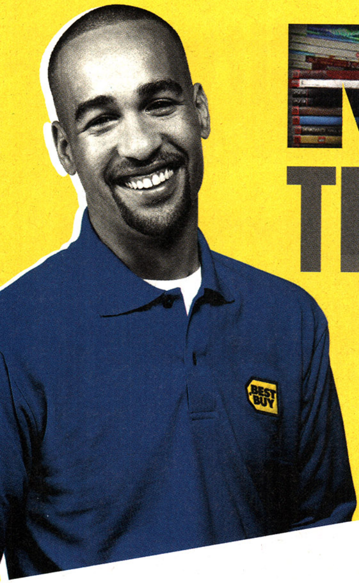
Obstacles and boosters such as jump pads and speed strips live in either the "light phase" or the "dark phase" of the track. Some have an effect when you race past on the light side; others do their thing only when you shift to the dark side. Taking advantage of them demands real finesse, but there's more: a few have the opposite effect in the opposite phase. A speed boost on the light side could be a brick wall on the dark side, for instance.

FAST's dozen courses would be loop-de-loop wild even without the added twist of phasing into the smoothest racing line. But with that twist, we could have a real thumb-buster in the making. Speed freaks should be able to check out the game by the end of the year. —**DAVID S.**



The racing gets even wilder with the addition of phase shifting!





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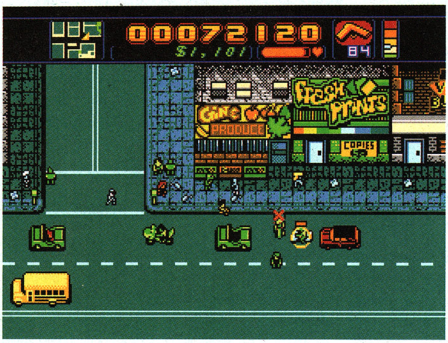
The Rogues of Retro City

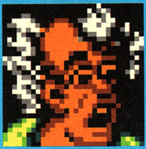
Meet the supporting cast of WiiWare open-world parody Retro City Rampage.

INSPIRED EQUALLY BY open-world crime games (such as Grand Theft Auto) and 8-bit titles from the 1980s, Retro City Rampage is an NES-style WiiWare adventure that's unlike anything you've played before. Sure, you've seen games in which you can engage in shootouts with the cops and swipe any vehicle you find, but not one that does it while parodying everything from The Legend of Zelda, Metal Gear, and Sonic the Hedgehog to *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure, Ghostbusters,* and *Back to the Future*. Controlling an antihero named Player (who gained amazing jumping abilities after being bitten by a radioactive plumber), you'll cruise the streets of Theftropolis, accomplishing a variety of missions and wreaking all sorts of havoc along the way. However, you won't be doing it alone. Read on to learn about some of the quirky characters you'll encounter and the missions on which you'll meet them. —**CHRIS H.**



Ah, Theftropolis! You can practically smell the sweet scent of pixels in the air.

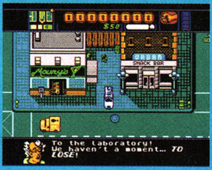
Doc Choc



Wanted For:
Speeding (at 88 MPH)

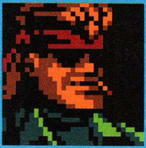
PROFILE:
The doc is a semimad scientist and, apparently, an expert on time travel. He's one of the first characters you meet on your adventure, and he offers to help you fix your telephone-booth time machine if you supply him with the parts (which he thinks you acquire through legitimate means) since he thinks you're on a mission to save the world. He's an honest guy, but a bit naive...not to mention lewd.

ENCOUNTERED ON MISSION: THE DARK BANK HEIST
In the game's introductory mission, you're a low-level henchman for a criminal mastermind named the Jester. After robbing a bank, using speed shoes to cross a busy street, and fighting your way past four green weirdos who pop out of the sewer, you find yourself inside a time-traveling phone booth that warps you from the year 1988 to 20XX (which looks suspiciously like 1988). When you arrive, you immediately encounter Doc Choc, who thinks you're a hero. He gives you a lift in his DeLorean and offers to help fix your time machine.



To the laboratory!
We haven't a moment... *TO LOSE!*

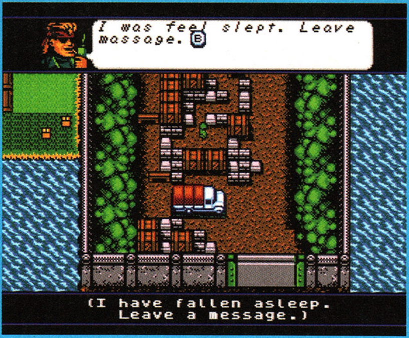
Major Lee Solid



Wanted For:
Hiding in a cardboard box

PROFILE:
This disgruntled ex-soldier has saved the world many times over. (Though the missions remain classified, rumors have it that aliens—or perhaps predators—were involved.) Despite his skills, he's been rendered obsolete by the new cyborg peacekeeper BioniCop, and he now works at the Ammo Gun Co. He'll help you hone your stealth abilities so you can sneak into an enemy base. Used to be Doc Choc's neighbor.

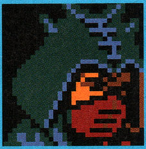
ENCOUNTERED ON MISSION: THE CONTRABAND COMMANDO
You're in need of a new Flux Combobulator to fix the time machine, but the only place you can get one is Geronimo Base. Luckily, Lee is willing to help you break into the joint if you run some errands for him along the way. To succeed, you'll have to sneak past the guards, hide in the back of a truck, fight your way through a heavily defended base, free a prisoner, escape via chopper, and defeat Lee's nemesis, BioniCop.



I was feel slept. Leave massage. Ⓑ

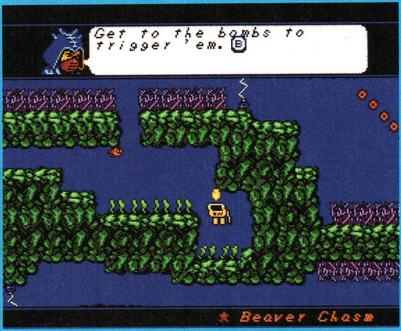
(I have fallen asleep. Leave a message.)

Mach Razorburn



Wanted For:
Cruelty to animals

PROFILE:
Mach Razorburn is a minor-league criminal who runs a shady paper-shredding factory that's used by the Theftropolis underworld for disposing of evidence; he's also the leader of the Razorbump Crew (Razorbump Quattro, Razorbump Turbo, and Razorbump Xtreme). Ever since losing a food-slicing competition, he's held a deep-seated hatred for turtles and pizza. Tends to laugh maniacally when speaking.

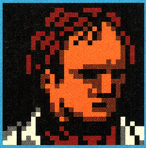


Get to the bombs to trigger 'em. B

★ Beaver Chasm

ENCOUNTERED ON MISSION:
THE EXTERMINATOR
Mach Razorburn wants you to do just one thing: destroy Beaver Chasm Dam to rid it of its pesky turtle infestation! The mission takes you underwater (because every retro-style game needs a water level!), where you'll have to avoid dangerous aquatic creatures and the ever-dreaded electric seaweed as you find and activate five time bombs.

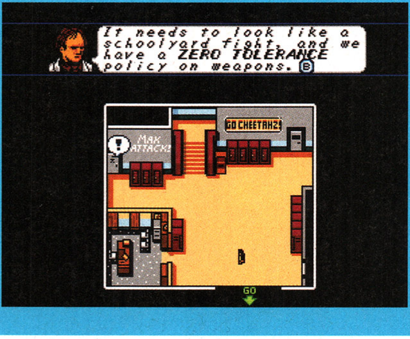
Principal Balding



Wanted For:
General incompetence; methane pollution

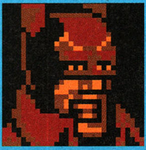
PROFILE:
The hapless principal of Bayshore High School. Tired of being the butt of pranks by student Duke Norris, there's nothing he wants more than to see Norris and his accomplice, MC Mullet, transfer to another school. He has a penchant for confiscating students' bubble gum; in fact, he's had a pack of gum made from rainbow dragon gelatin stored in his desk drawer since 1973.

ENCOUNTERED ON MISSION: SAVED BY THE BUBBLE GUM
When you first encounter Principal Balding, he has a bit of a problem. As a result of one of Duke Norris's pranks, he's ingested a bit too much Excre-Max, and now he can't even leave the restroom. To earn the pack of vintage bubble gum stored in Balding's desk, you agree to help him out by teaching Norris a lesson he'll never forget. Wild fisticuffs ensue, but the mission takes an unexpected turn when Norris reveals he has a key to Balding's desk.



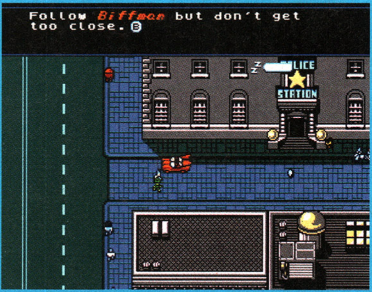
It needs to look like a schoolyard fight, and we have a ZERO TOLERANCE policy on weapons. B

Biffman



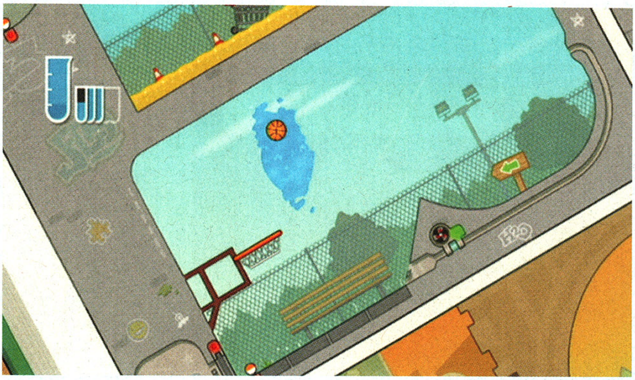
Wanted For:
Vigilantism; being a public nuisance

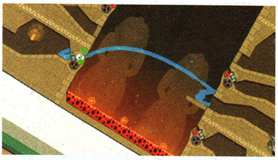
PROFILE:
Theftropolis's resident superhero, Biffman can deliver powerful punches and use boomerangs to knock out criminals with a "biff," a "pow," or a "zonk." He drives a car called the Biffmobile, which can shoot fire out of its rear end (and set anything—or anyone—nearby ablaze). Biffman's true identity is a secret, but rumor has it he lives in one of the fanciest parts of the city.



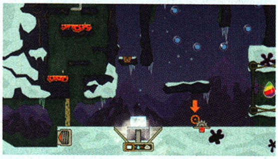
Follow Biffman but don't get too close. B

ENCOUNTERED ON MISSION:
BIFF! POW! HOLY COW!
Does every open-world adventure game need a tail-the-enemies mission? Apparently so. But at least Player knows how to get through this one without falling asleep—by stopping for coffee along the way. If you manage to follow Biffman from the police station to his home without dozing off, you'll have the opportunity to sneak into his hideout and snag his costume and the Biffmobile for your personal use.



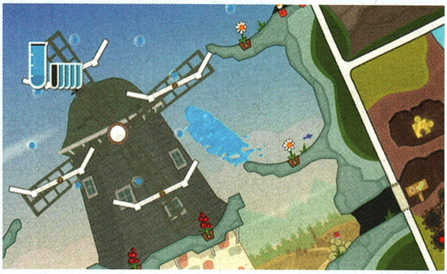


[Below] Feeling all washed up? Then chill out by turning into a block of ice.



H2O Hero

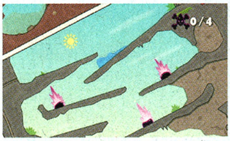
Get wet and wild with Fluidity for WiiWare.

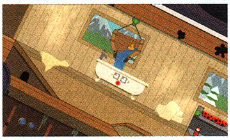


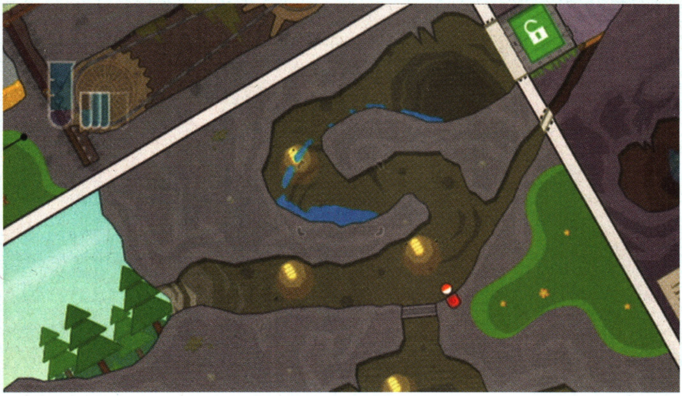
MOVE OVER LINK and Samus Aran; there's a new adventure hero in town—water! OK, maybe that's exaggerating a bit, but Nintendo's Fluidity is more than just a physics-based action-puzzle game. Fluidity's most basic play mechanic involves tilting the Wii Remote controller left or right to tilt the 2D world and make water move in the corresponding direction. By doing so, you can maneuver the water up hills and into crevices, and by flicking the remote you can even make the water jump. Authentic water physics ensure that the liquid behaves like it should, but be careful; if a few drops get separated from your main pool for too long they'll evaporate. Fortunately, you can collect extra water droplets along the way to replenish your supply.

But that's just the beginning. As you explore the game world—which is set inside a magical, living book named Aquaticus—you'll be able to trigger switches to open doors, carry floating objects (such as gears) from place to place to make things interact, and wash away creepy bad guys known as The Influence. Your goal is to collect magical Rainbow Drops to cleanse The Influence from Aquaticus's pages, and as you do so, you'll open new passageways in the vast, nonlinear levels. Before long you'll be opening shortcuts, unlocking teleporters, interacting with objects (such as water wheels and moving platforms), avoiding hazards (like lava and acid), and solving puzzles (getting a goldfish back into its bowl, for example, or filling up a bucket until it breaks and releases a needed item). There are also nonplayable characters to help and new abilities to learn, including a Gather power that lets you pull the water together and then unleash it with a forceful explosion (which is great for knocking away crates).

With surprisingly deep gameplay supported by numerous collectibles and side missions, Fluidity has all the makings of a must-play adventure. The game should be released before the end of the year.
—CHRIS H.







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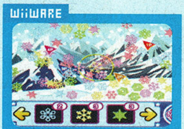
EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE



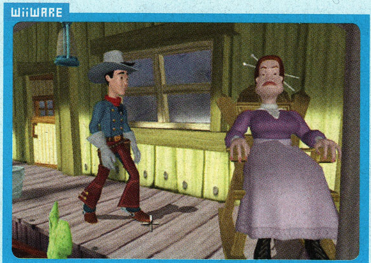
ADVENTURE ON LOST ISLAND—HIDDEN OBJECT GAME

PUBLISHER: **ATEAM**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Here we have a classic case of confused game design. Play centers on a rudimentary matching game suited only to young children. Unfortunately, making matches often requires players to shoot fast-moving objects onscreen—an activity that relies on fairly sophisticated hand/eye coordination. Kids young enough to be interested in this game are likely incapable of playing it. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



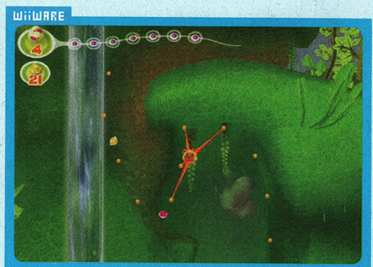
FENIMORE FILLMORE "THE WESTERNER"

PUBLISHER: **REVISTRONIC** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

A port of an obscure PC game, Fenimore Fillmore "The Westerner" is a point-and-click adventure that has a lot of heart but is severely rough around the edges. The game is certainly ambitious—there are a lot of items to use and tons of puzzles to solve—but the camera angles are often atrocious and the character pathfinding is laughable. The graphics are a mixed bag; though the stylized characters generally look pretty sharp, the frame rate is frequently pathetic. Likewise, the story and writing are decent, but without voice acting the jokes tend to fall flat. There's a solid adventure beneath all these problems, but it takes a lot of tolerance to experience it. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



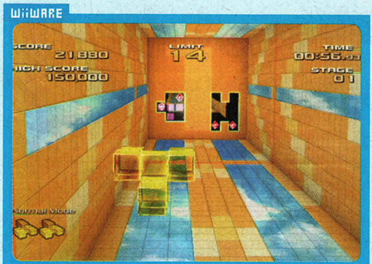
TALES OF ELASTIC BOY—MISSION 1

PUBLISHER: **LEXIS NUMÉRIQUE** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** Wii POINTS: **600**

Tales of Elastic Boy: Mission 1 is a unique pseudoplatformer that heavily utilizes the Wii Remote's motion control in the relatively fluid movement of your character (or slime, as it were). The seven single-player levels incorporate entertaining puzzlelike objectives such as pointing the remote at the screen to move your slime from peg to peg and correctly catapulting it into a desired area or foe—a feat that is both challenging and greatly satisfying. While the main campaign is on the short side (it *is* only Mission 1, after all), the two-player mode is as addictive as the single-player action. At only 600 Wii Points, this one is worth looking into. —**CODY M.**

Recommended

WiiWARE



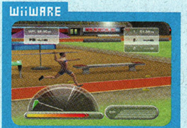
THRUSPACE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **PUZZLE** Wii POINTS: **800**

If you thought there was nothing else you could do with Tetris-style blocks other than pile them up and eliminate them, think again. In ThruSpace, your goal is to move and rotate such blocks in three dimensions so you can slip them through various-sized gaps while creating patterns and collecting gems. Getting through the gaps is easy, but doing it while racing the clock and racking up combos is a unique, addictive challenge that requires a quick mind and fast reflexes. You'll likely find yourself wanting to play "one more round" to achieve a new high score, especially after you've unlocked the more-complex block types. If the standard timed mode is too nerve-wracking, you can opt to play the more relaxing Endless mode. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

WiiWARE



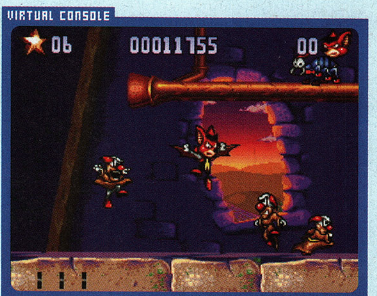
TRIPLE THROWING SPORTS

PUBLISHER: **THE CODE MONKEYS**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Offering three events—discus, hammer throw, and javelin—Triple Throwing Sports is a throwback to the button-mashing track-and-field games of the arcade age. You'll be furiously waggling the Nunchuk and/or Wii Remote rather than hammering buttons, but it's still all about building speed, setting an angle, and timing your release. For the price it's light on content, but the action is so ergonomically taxing you're unlikely to miss the depth. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



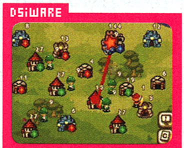
AERO THE ACROBAT 2

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **SUNSOFT**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

The original Aero the Acrobat was a decent game, but it contained a few irritating quirks that kept it trapped in the realm of "mediocre platformers starring an animal with 'tude." Like a good sequel should, Aero 2 addresses those problems, making the overall experience much more enjoyable. The large, open stages are back, but they're more fun to explore thanks to better design and more variety. Aero's controls have been tweaked, so he's far more responsive. Even the graphics and music have been vastly improved. There are also disco-clown enemies, so the game has that going for it, too. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



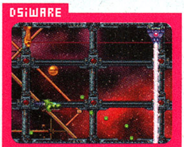
CASTLE CONQUEROR

PUBLISHER: **CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

More action-puzzler than RTS, Castle Conquerer boils down to moving troops from one stronghold to another with a flick of the stylus. If your forces overwhelm the existing army, the castle is yours. The goal is to take over all of the fortresses controlled by an AI rival. It's a tad tricky to get started because battles are over within a minute in most cases, but all of the elements come together for a simple, satisfying playing experience. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



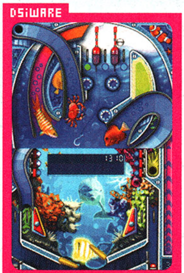
COSMOS X2

PUBLISHER: **SATURNINE GAMES**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Though more methodical than a typical shooter, Cosmos X2 has some neat play mechanics. Since your ship is fairly bulky, it's hard to weave through shots; you'll have to rely on swapping between two weapons (each with a separate life bar) and liberally using a handy shield. The game isn't especially hard, but since you get only one life and no continues, it can be frustrating. Nonetheless, the game provides solid action for shooter fans. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



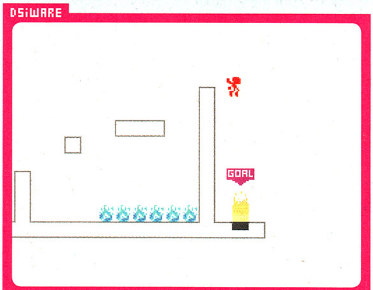
CRAZY PINBALL

PUBLISHER: **DTP ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PINBALL**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

With a selection of five tables, Crazy Pinball sounds promising. All but the first table, however, needs to be unlocked. When they do become available, the mostly empty boards and bland goals fail to excite. Even with just one table, Pinball Pulse trounces this tedious game. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



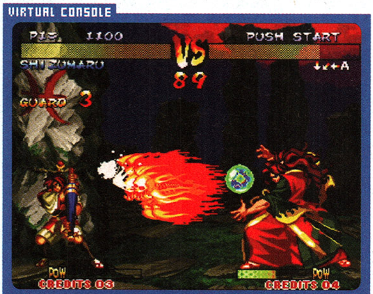
GO SERIES 10 SECOND RUN

PUBLISHER: **GAMEBRIDGE** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Go Series 10 Second Run is a 2D platformer on...whatever the opposite of steroids is. The graphics are straight out of a late-'70s arcade, and all you do is race through micro levels to beat your best time (and/or number of lost lives). And I do mean *micro*; in Trial mode you'll have a 10-second time limit. The action gets progressively more fraught, as simple run/jump fare gives way to levels teeming with gaping pits and moving enemies and platforms. In fact, it's fair to say that by the 50th level the difficulty is excruciating. The game's appeal depends on your answer to one question: do you miss the days of replaying the same level a million times to "beat" it? —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



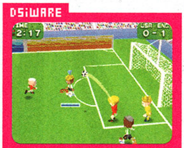
SAMURAI SHODOWN III

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO** PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **FIGHTING** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1995**

I consider myself a fan of the Samurai Shodown franchise, but I can't say that I like Samurai Shodown III all that much. Maybe it's because the game is the sequel to my favorite iteration of the weapons-based fighting-game series and therefore has a lot to live up to, or maybe it's because Samurai Shodown III is just too difficult for me to find it enjoyable. (The matches feel rather short—usually ending with my defeat—due to the combatants dealing more damage than before. Also, SNK fighters are challenging in general.) Either way, it's a shame because I really dig this game's characters and graphics. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



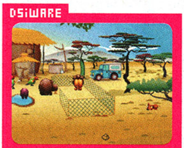
EVERYDAY SOCCER

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Teams of four have it out on a small pitch in a high-scoring take on the world's favorite sport. The mundane game name and Mii-like look of the athletes suggest a design for casual gamers, but the AI is ratcheted up for experts. Passing on the run is tricky and special moves assigned to the A Button can be passes or shots, depending on the body type of the athlete, which makes those moves more confusing than useful. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



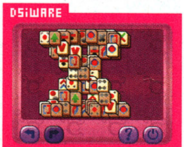
MY EXOTIC FARM

PUBLISHER: **BIP MEDIA**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

My Exotic Farm is a reskinned version of BiP Media's plain ol' My Farm. Instead of a farm background, you see an African desert. Instead of raising chickens, sheep, and pigs, you raise parrots, lions, and zebras. Aside from the graphics, it's the exact same game. That means there's precious little to do, and the simplistic gameplay quickly becomes dull and repetitive. Even the ability to trade animals with My Farm doesn't help. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



SIMPLY MAHJONG

PUBLISHER: **ENGINE SOFTWARE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

True to its name, Simply Mahjong is a bare-bones affair; you get 150 crudely rendered puzzles divided across three difficulty levels, and that's it. While the game does offer niceties such as back, forward, and hint buttons, its lack of a save/resume feature (requiring you to finish puzzles in one sitting) reveals simplicity's horrid underbelly. (Also, an option to change the unappealing tile designs would be much appreciated.) —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

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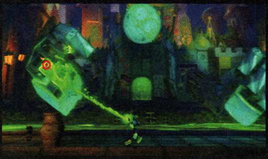
EPIC MICKEY

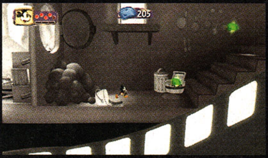
How do you spell fun and adventure? M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E.

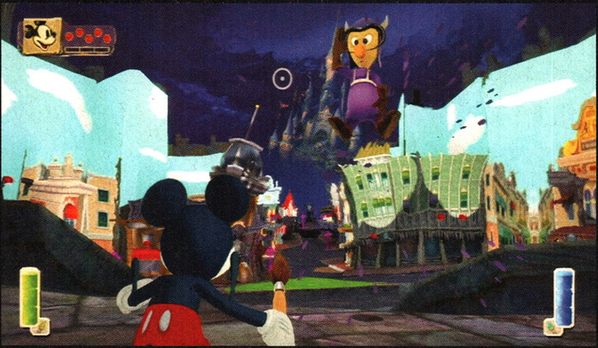
EVERY TIME WE see more of Disney's Epic Mickey, the more reassured we are that the game is going to be as grand as its title implies. If you've been following our coverage of the game, then you already know the adventure begins when the iconic Mickey Mouse gets pulled by the evil Phantom Blot into a world of forgotten Disney creations. Unbeknownst to Mickey, he accidentally unleashed the Phantom Blot upon this world many years earlier, turning it into a region now known as the Wasteland. As Mickey and the Blot tumble into the Wasteland, they temporarily merge, which results in Mickey's drippy-ink appearance that is seen in most of the game's artwork and screenshots.

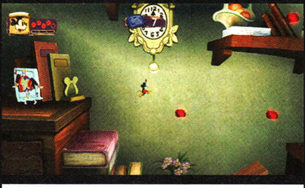
Though Mickey manages to get away from the Phantom Blot, he winds up in a strange, moody, melancholy place that's been ravaged by the Blot's influence. The first locale you get to explore is Dark Beauty Castle—essentially the Wasteland version of Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. It's here that you'll learn the Epic Mickey basics: double-jumping, spinning (by shaking the Wii Remote controller à la Super Mario Galaxy) to smash or interact with objects, and spraying paint and thinner from Mickey's magical paintbrush to revive or destroy elements of the game world (including enemies, NPCs, and parts of the environment).



[Above] It's about time for Mickey to show this crazed clock who's *really* the boss.





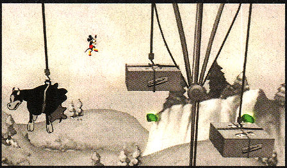


[Above] Mickey finds himself in a world of giants in the *Thru the Mirror* platforming stage.

Beyond Dark Beauty Castle are many other regions of the Wasteland, but to get to them you'll have to travel through brief 2D platforming stages inspired by Mickey's classic cartoon escapades. The initial one you'll encounter is based on *Mickey and the Beanstalk*, in which Mickey—you guessed it—ascends a giant beanstalk. Other 2D stages are inspired by other cartoons, including the breakthrough black-and-white hit *Steamboat Willie*. Though Disney has been showing Steamboat Willie levels since Epic Mickey's debut, for this preview we got to play a brand-new stage based on the cartoon. Like the other *Steamboat Willie* stages, this one features springy chicken coops and hapless hanging heifers, but it also contains a sprint through a hazardous kitchen (beware the bouncing potatoes!) and a brief encounter with steamboat captain Peg-Leg Pete.

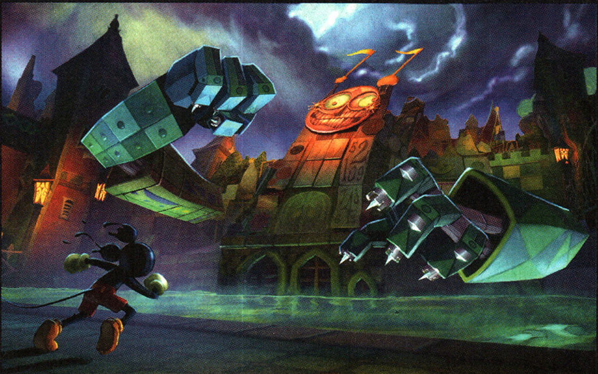
Upon completing the 2D action stage, we found ourselves facing off against the game's first boss—a giant clock tower with a demented grin, crazy eyes, and massive arms that attempt to pound Mickey into the dirt while a warped version of "It's a Small World" plays in the background. Epic Mickey creative director Warren Spector has consistently said he wants the game to be about players' choices and consequences, and that holds true even in boss fights. If you aspire to be the gallant hero, you can coat the boss's arms in paint—a challenging feat, since one arm can recover while you're spraying the other—then climb the arms and paint the clock's face to restore it to its normal, happy state. On the other hand, if you prefer to teach the boss a lesson, you can destroy its arms with thinner—which causes the boss's limbs, as well as its face, to fall into the muck below so Mickey can use them as platforms. Depending on whether you beat the boss with paint or thinner, you'll receive a permanent capacity upgrade for the corresponding substance.

The next locale we visited was Mean Street, the Wasteland interpretation of Disneyland's Main Street USA; it serves as one of Epic Mickey's many hub worlds. Unlike the adventure stages or 2D transitional stages, the hub worlds are less about action and more about exploration and interacting with other characters by accepting missions and completing tasks. Your goal in Mean Street is to obtain two gears and an energy source called a Power Spark so you can move on to the next area, but to do that you'll have to visit with many of Mean Street's citizens, including Horace Horsecollar, a cow named Gilda, and Big Bad Pete (a different version of Pete than the one in *Steamboat Willie*). After completing a few tasks, such as fetching a book for Horace, running and jumping your way through a simple obstacle course, and buying a sword once used by Captain Hook, you'll be able to proceed, but many of the characters have optional quests for you that you won't be able to complete until later.



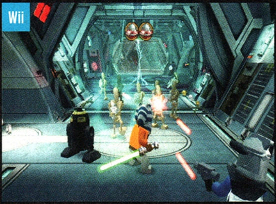
Our last stop for this preview was another bite-sized 2D stage—one based on *Thru the Mirror*. Like in the 1936 cartoon, Mickey gets shrunk down to the size of, er, a mouse, after which he finds himself running atop seemingly giant desks, leaping across a spinning globe, bouncing off a huge top hat, and facing sword-wielding playing cards come to life. Though our tour of the Wasteland concluded after finishing the stage, we know that there will be much, much more to see and explore in the final game. Fortunately, we won't have much longer to wait; the game should be out at the end of November. **—CHRIS H.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **JUNCTION POINT**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**



LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS

Blocky these Clone Wars are.



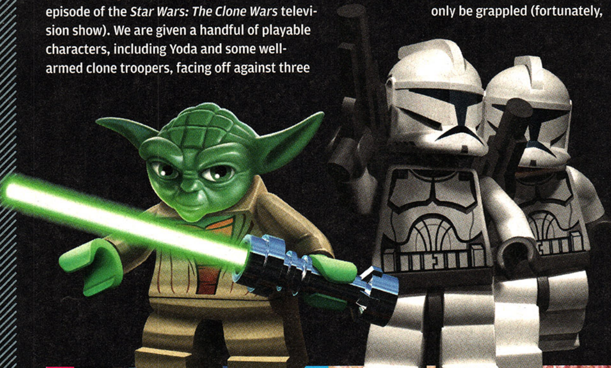
AFTER FIVE YEARS of LEGO-ized Star Wars games, you probably know what to expect from LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars—pick-up-and-play, brick-building/destroying gameplay, and charming cut-scenes starring recognizable characters. But developer Traveller's Tales has taken what it has learned from the past half-decade and refined it, making for a slightly deeper gameplay experience.

Take the first stage we played of the Wii console version, for example, set on the coral planet of Rugosa (the setting for the first episode of the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* television show). We are given a handful of playable characters, including Yoda and some well-armed clone troopers, facing off against three Trade Federation tanks. Well, you say, Yoda can take care of this by himself! And for the first tank, he can—but not by using his lightsaber. The vehicle has golden turrets that can be destroyed only by a rapid-fire blaster, keeping the Jedi Master from getting too close. The clone equipped with such a weapon lost an arm in a previous cut-scene, so Yoda uses the Force to grab a super battle droid, aiming its blaster at the tank's golden areas. For the second and third tanks, Yoda needs a little help from his friends. The second tank's turrets can only be grappled (fortunately, you have a grappling-hook-equipped trooper with you), whereas the third tank has silver turrets (a rocket-launcher-wielding clone makes short work of that).

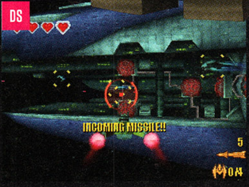
One of the most exciting new additions is the Scene Swap, wherein two characters accomplish tasks in two different areas at the same time. In a later level (based on the TV episode "Duel of the Droids"), for instance, Anakin is searching for R2-D2 while his Padawan, Ahsoka, is off fighting General Grievous in a different part of a Separatist installation. You can see what the other Jedi is doing in a small window on the screen, and swap between the two at will. (If you're playing with a buddy, though, the screen splits and each player controls one of the characters.)

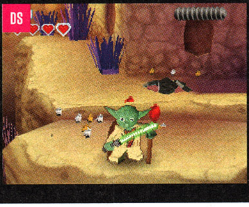
You don't actually see your buddy character onscreen when playing solo in the Nintendo DS handheld version (you do see your pal when playing local co-op, however); instead, you cycle through playable party members using the R and L Buttons. Other new features include a wall-jump and saber-cut (you use a lightsaber to cut open doors via a touch-screen minigame) abilities for the Jedi. —**JUSTIN C.**

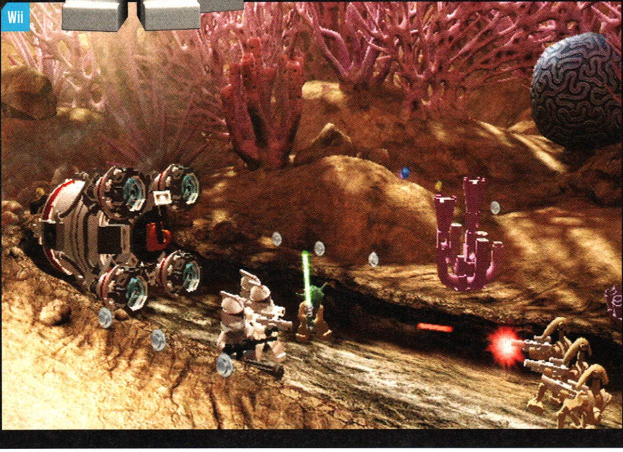
Wii DS **PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
RELEASE: 2011



[Right] Yoda may be awesome, but he won't get far without some clones.







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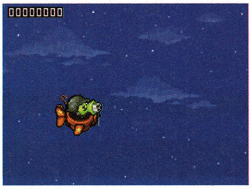
PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES

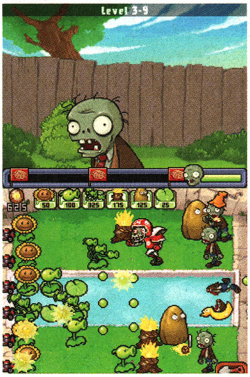
Get off my lawn!

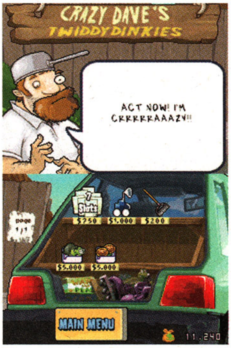
The vibrant and outrageously silly backyard battle between sunshine-soaking plant life and rampaging hordes of brain-gnawing undead has already played out pleasantly on a handful of different platforms, but Nintendo DS owners will finally get their own unique taste of the lawn-warfare action. Positioning a bevy of defensive plants to harness sunshine and stave off attacking waves of zombie invaders in this wacky tower-defense puzzler promises to be as wild and crazy as ever on the dual-screened handheld.

Your main objective is to serve as the last line of defense for your homeowner's apparently delicious brains. Using a range of flower warriors and burly fungi, you'll frantically work to take down the rotting invaders before they can breach your defenses. Beyond all the content from the original Plants vs. Zombies game, the DS version will feature a handful of new minigames, a local ad hoc versus mode, and other extras. —NATHAN M.

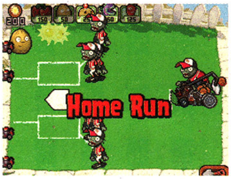
DS
PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **POPCAP GAMES**
RELEASE DATE: **JANUARY 2011**







[Below] Baseball sure got weird after the zombie apocalypse.

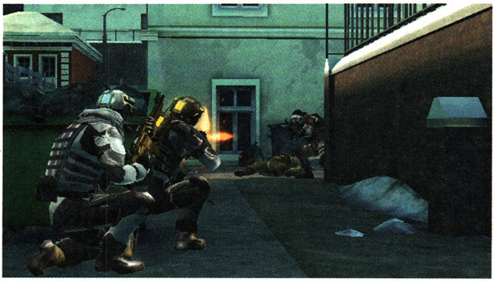


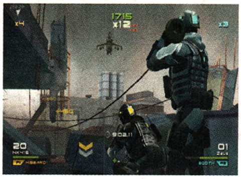
TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

Who needs stealth when you've got guns?

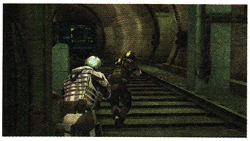
Considering that these guys are called *Ghosts*, you would think they'd try to be as invisible as possible. Not so much in this Wii-exclusive title. A third-person light-gun-style shooter, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon has you and a partner running—on rails—through a near-future Russia, taking cover (by pointing your reticle at a location designated by a chevron and tapping either A or C), and shooting baddies (by holding Z and pulling B). To make survival against waves of well-armed soldiers easier, you have a variety of weapons to choose from—you select armaments such as submachine guns, sniper rifles, and grenades via the Control Pad or Control Stick—and a power-up called Focus, which slows down time. This is definitely a different direction for the franchise; whether that's for better or worse remains to be seen, but the fact that this Ghost Recon is being developed by Next Level Games (responsible for Punch-Out!!) has us psyched. —JUSTIN C.

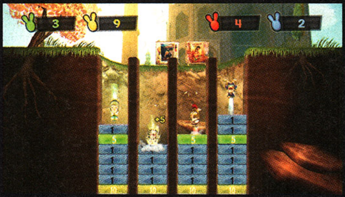
Wii
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **NEXT LEVEL GAMES**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**

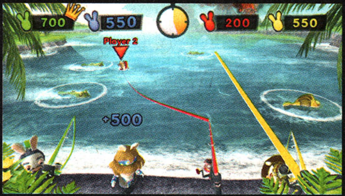




It's up to you and a (CPU or human) pal to fight for freedom wherever there's trouble.







RAVING RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME

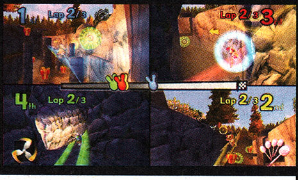
The Rabbids are about to become history!

REMEMBER WHEN YOU learned in school about how Christopher Columbus discovered America only to encounter a bunch of Rabbids drinking fish juice? Or when Neil Armstrong was attempting to land on the moon in 1969 but got knocked off course by demented bunnies smashing disco balls in outer space? OK, so maybe that isn't the way those events were explained in history class, but you'll get to experience them nonetheless in Raving Rabbids Travel in Time, the latest minigame collection starring everybody's favorite screaming, psychotic lagomorphs.

The minigames are divided into five general types—shooting, flying, foot racing, bouncing, and fishing—but they run the gamut when it comes to their historical inspirations. For example, in Assembling-Bling Line the Rabbids try to build Model T cars; in Bozo the Sphinx they attempt to construct a pyramid out of jelly; in Way-Over Layover the Rabbids interfere with the Wright Brothers' flying experiments; and in HowDyaLikeDemApples they toss crates at Sir Isaac Newton as he's attempting to discover the law of gravity. If you're the winner of a given minigame, you'll have the opportunity to keep history as it originally was (more or less) or opt to completely rewrite it like only the Rabbids can.

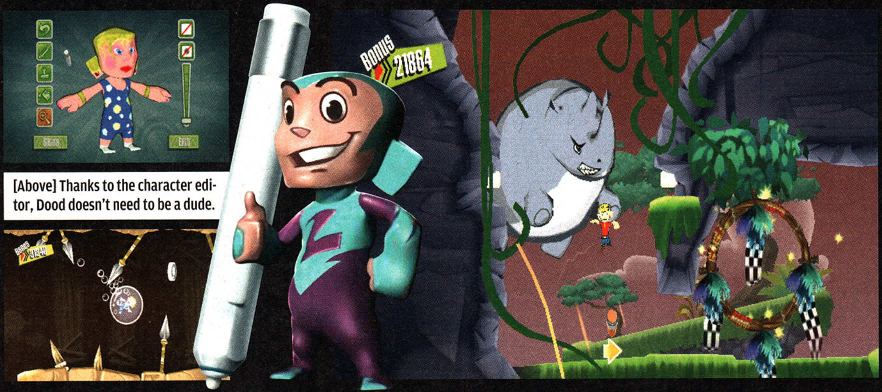
Additional stand-alone minigames (such as singing and dancing contests), competitive and co-op play, and 38 Rabbid costumes (ranging from Napoleon to Ghandi) add to Travel in Time's party appeal. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**



[Below] The 1929: Crash, Boom, Bang minigame proves that everybody loves economic collapse.

822
840
670
648



[Above] Thanks to the character editor, Dood doesn't need to be a dude.

DOOD'S BIG ADVENTURE

This Dood's quick on the draw.

THQ'S UDRAW GAMETABLET—a stylus-controlled touch pad for the Wii console—has a lot of potential. Not only can it be used for creating artistic masterpieces and engaging in group activities (see sidebar), but it'll allow you to enjoy an all-new breed of platformer: Dood's Big Adventure.

Of course, since Dood's Big Adventure is controlled exclusively by the uDraw GameTablet, it does feature a significant artistic aspect: you get to apply your drawing talents to Dood (the main character), the bad guys, the obstacles, the background elements, and more. You don't create the character models, but you do get to design everything from their clothes to their faces.

Once you've painted the characters, you'll get to control Dood in four different gameplay modes (each with 15 stages). In Pen Panic, you'll use the uDraw stylus to make Dood run, jump, and climb through obstacle-filled levels. By collecting orange ink you'll be able to draw platforms to bounce Dood to new heights, and by collecting black ink you'll gain the ability to fling projectiles at bad guys with a flick of the stylus. Roly Poly mode, on the other hand, doesn't use the stylus at all; instead you'll tilt the tablet to move, and press the A Button to jump. The high-speed action and rollercoasterlike level design make Roly Poly feel like a cross between Super Monkey Ball and Sonic the Hedgehog. Meanwhile, in Bubble Trouble mode you'll use the touch pad to help a bubble-encased Dood navigate passageways and avoid a variety of enemies (including ships that look like TIE fighters!), and in Fan Frenzy you'll use the stylus to blow an inflated Dood through the air.

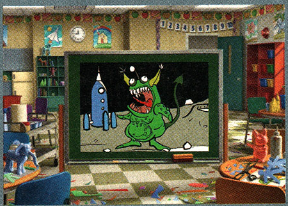
Though Dood's Big Adventure isn't the first artsy platformer out there (Drawn to Life, anyone?), it's sure to carve its own niche among creative gamers. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **THQ DIGITAL PHOENIX**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**

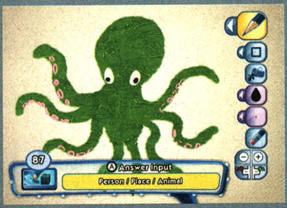
Bonus
17297

ON THE DRAW

Dood's Big Adventure is just one of three games THQ is launching with the uDraw GameTablet. Here's a look at the other two.



UDRAW STUDIO Bundled with the uDraw GameTablet for $69.99, uDraw Studio is a full-fledged art program. You can choose your drawing surface (from paper to chalkboard to concrete), your drawing implement (pen, watercolor, crayon, etc.), your color palette, and more. You can even add special effects and export your creations to an SD memory card.



PICTIONARY Based on the board game of the same name, Pictionary is a team-based game in which players draw sketches based on the clues they receive, then have their teammates guess what they've drawn. In addition to regular Pictionary, there's a Pictionary Mania mode that adds restrictions to the drawing process, such as limiting your ink or requiring you to draw using only straight lines.

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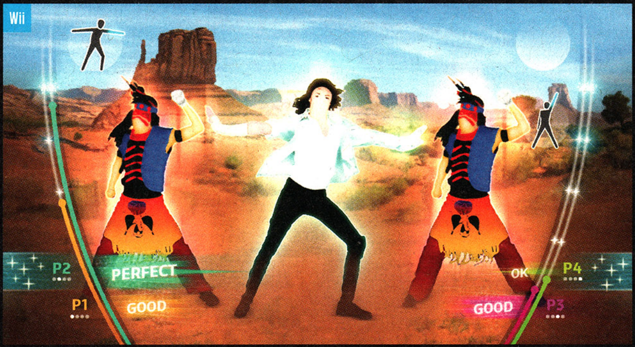
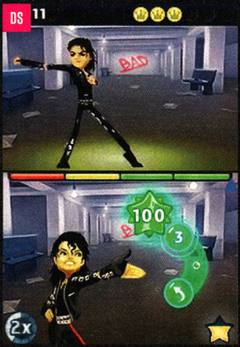




MICHAEL JACKSON: THE EXPERIENCE

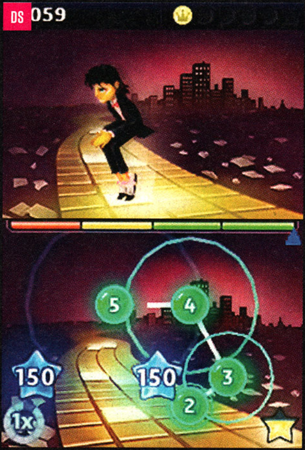
The King of Pop reigns on Wii and DS.

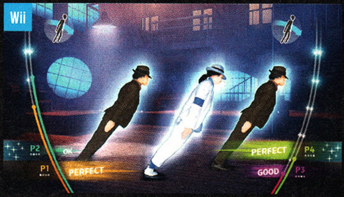
IS THERE A bigger star in the world of music than Michael Jackson? Not according to the Guinness Book of World Records, which calls him the most successful musician of all time. He has performed dozens of hit songs, sold out hundreds of venues around the world, and been listened to by millions if not billions of fans. And soon gamers will be able to enjoy the gloved one's music in a whole new way thanks to Ubisoft's Michael Jackson: The Experience on Wii and Nintendo DS.

The Wii version of the game is all about mimicking Michael Jackson's legendary dance moves. While the music plays and a convincingly animated virtual MJ boogies, icons featuring various poses scroll up the side of the screen. With Wii Remote controller in hand, you'll match the poses to perform Michael's famous moves. More than 20 songs from throughout his career are featured—including "Workin' Day and Night," "Beat It," "Billie Jean," "The Girl Is Mine," "Bad," "Smooth Criminal," "Who Is It," "Black or White," and "Heal the World"—and each is accompanied by unique environments and song-specific moves straight from live performances and music videos. Up to four players can even participate simultaneously, either cooperatively or in two-on-two competition. The only thing that's missing is a pelvis-gesturing peripheral.

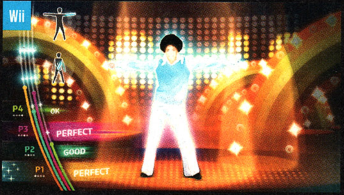
The DS version of Michael Jackson: The Experience provides rhythm-based action of a different sort. Despite MJ's reputation as a music innovator, the DS game's action is lifted directly from Elite Beat Agents. That's not a complaint; if you're gonna borrow, you might as well borrow from the best. You'll tap the screen as circles overlap, follow icons as they move along paths, and occasionally make wild spinning motions with the stylus—all to the beat of 12 of Michael's greatest hits. Unlockable videos and a Collection mode—featuring Jackson iconography such as his glove and his pet chimp, Bubbles—round out the game's content.
—**CHRIS H.**

Wii DS PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER IN COLLABORATION WITH JUST DANCE TEAM PARIS (Wii), UBISOFT BRAZIL (DS)**
RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER 2010**





[Above] Sadly, the game does not give you bonus points if you play while wearing a swanky white fedora.



Because Jess plays video games the ESRB (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.
TEEN
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www.ESRB.org

BY **CHRIS SLATE**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **RETRO STUDIOS** RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010** Wii

THE BOYS ARE BACK!

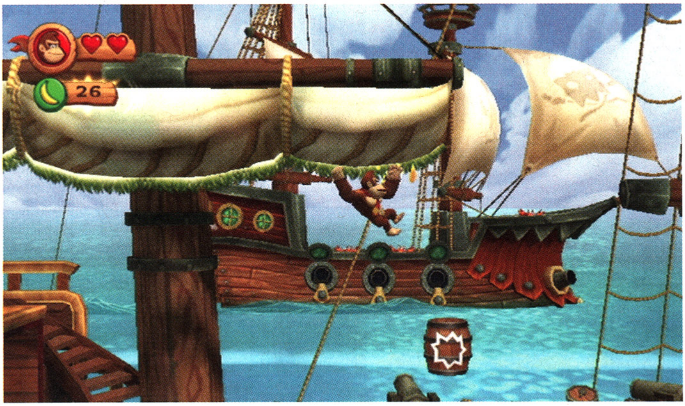
Nintendo's premier primates are finally back where they belong in the long-awaited Donkey Kong Country Returns.

After a week spent running, jumping, rolling, and smashing through Donkey Kong Country Returns, it's hard for us to believe that the folks at Retro Studios haven't been making platformers for years. If it weren't for the game's stunning production values—from gorgeous graphics to spot-on controls to amazing audio—it would have nothing in common with the developer's only previous works, the Metroid Prime trilogy. But somehow, Retro's debut platformer is so good that it makes a monkey out of the original Donkey Kong Country.

Speaking of the Super NES classic, longtime fans will remember that DKC was a revolution when it first brought prerendered CG graphics to the console in 1994. The game built a world around Nintendo's iconic ape and, for a time, carried the flag for the platforming genre while Mario took a break. For a generation of gamers, this was the definitive Nintendo experience. Two sequels followed, but with the switch to the polygonal Donkey Kong 64 for Nintendo 64, the classic Donkey Kong Country formula was set aside. However, on November 21—16 years to the day since the release of the original Donkey Kong Country—that classic DKC gameplay will return at last.

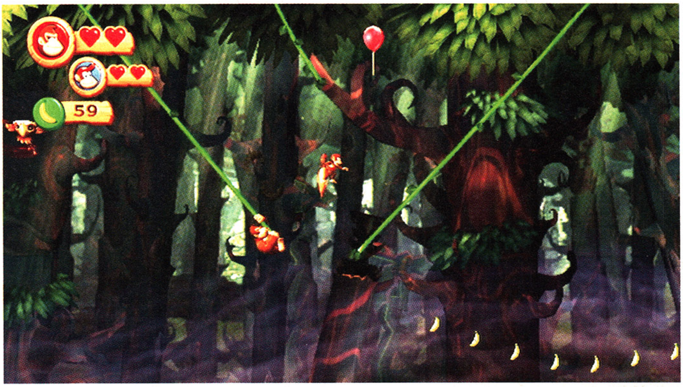
THE APE EVOLVES

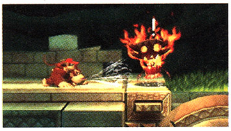
Although Donkey Kong Country Returns doesn't aim to break any new graphical ground, it offers up plenty of platforming goodness that pays homage to—and even surpasses—the Super NES trilogy. Fans of the series will feel right at home bouncing off bad guys, blasting from barrel to barrel, searching for secrets, riding rhinos and mine carts, and dying over and over. (The game honors the legendary difficulty level of its predecessors, so be ready for a challenge.) The series's famously catchy, jazzy tunes are also back, and are sure to keep you smiling and your toes tapping, even when repeatedly losing your mine cart down the same bottomless pit.



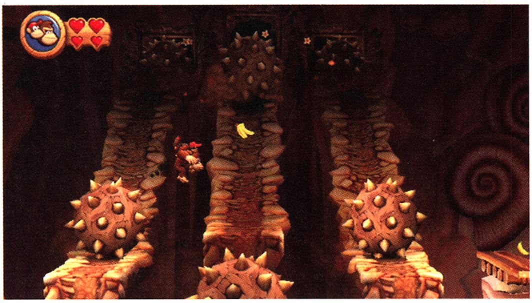
But Donkey Kong Returns is so much more than a simple redo of the past games. What impresses us most is the incredible attention to detail evident in each level. There is a tremendous amount of gameplay variety to keep things feeling fresh, and lots of big scripted events that give the game an epic, cinematic feel. For example, a giant screen-filling octopus hunts Donkey Kong through an entire level, surprising the player with changing attack strategies. In another instance, a pirate ship fires at Donkey Kong through much of a stage. And there are frequent times when hitting the right trigger can reshape an entire area, causing large parts of the environment to crumble or rise from the ground. From world to world, Donkey Kong Country Returns delivers a *spectacle*.

Another big improvement is the addition of co-op multiplayer. Whereas Donkey Kong's little buddy Diddy Kong previously just tagged along, essentially offering an on-the-spot extra life, now two players can guide both simians through the entire game. Teaming up works almost exactly as it does in New Super Mario Bros. Wii—when one player loses a life, he floats back onscreen in a balloon-lifted barrel that his partner must smash to set him free. Shaking the Wii Remote controller nudges the barrel closer to the active ape, and





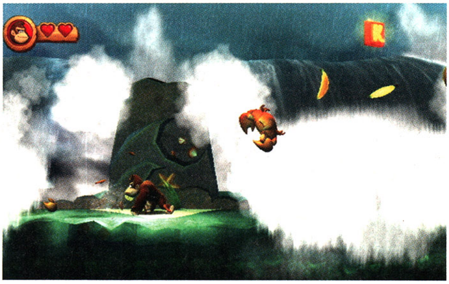
[Below] This is what happens when you try to hypnotize an ape.



both players pull from the same pool of extra lives. If one player is left behind and is offscreen for a few seconds, he's zipped to his partner's side. Keeping both characters in view can be tricky at times, such as when swinging from vine to vine, so playing with a pal can make the game a tad harder. But because the team can continue through a level so long as both players don't die simultaneously, the difficulty balances out.

The Kremlings, who served as the series's enemies in the old days, have handed over bad-guy duties to the Tiki Tak Tribe, a group of magical masks that use hypnotic powers to turn the island's animals against our heroes. One of the Tikis tries to possess Donkey Kong at the start of the game, but fails comically when the ape belts him into the wild blue yonder. This game also cuts down dramatically on the number of

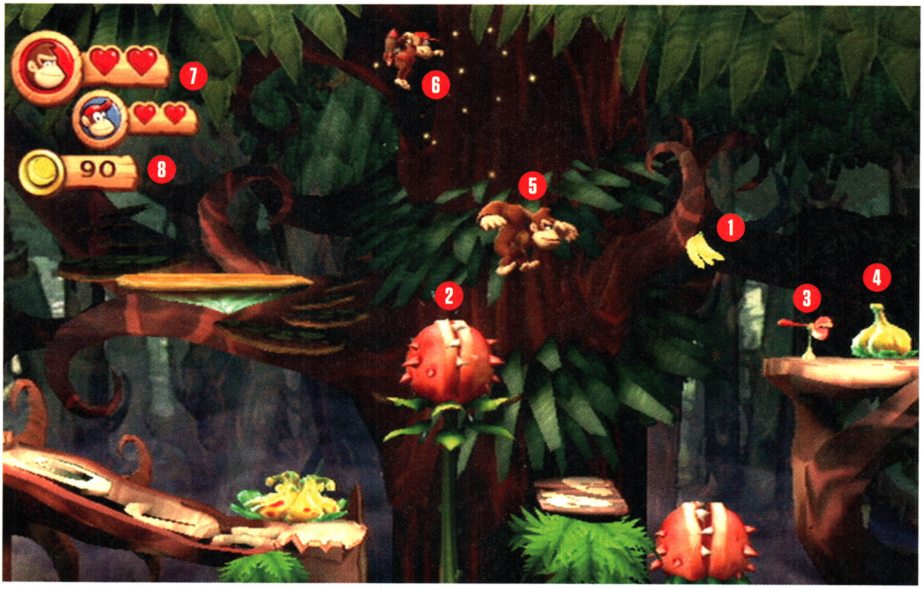
LEVEL CLEAR!
KONG
6/7
RETRY
CONTINUE



[Above] Here, you must hide behind a barrier to avoid getting washed away.

Ape Close and Personal

Let's take a closer look at the onscreen action—as close as we can safely get to an angry, banana-starved ape, that is.



1. BUNCH OF BANANAS Better than a single banana, but not worth getting yourself killed over. A hundred bananas nets an extra life.

2. DANGER! The inside of its mouth might look warm and cozy, but don't go in there.

3. PLANT The varying flora found in each world can be blown to reveal hidden items.

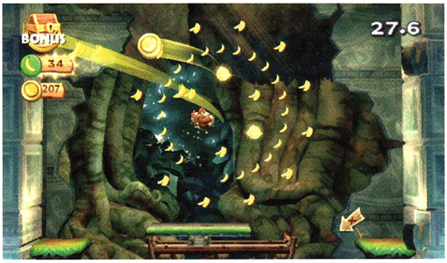
4. POD Pound the ground to make secret goodies pop out of pods like these.

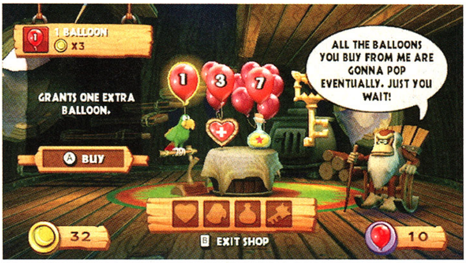
5. DONKEY KONG Our headlining hero is strong and tough, but his jumping ability takes a dive when he isn't paired with his little pal.

6. DIDDY KONG His Peanut Pop Gun can stun foes from a distance, and his Barrel Jet adds a second of hover to his jump.

7. HEARTS One heart is lost with each hit, but when Diddy Kong is on Donkey Kong's back, you get four of them.

8. ITEM COUNT When an item like a banana or Banana Coin is collected, the number you have briefly appears on screen.





GRANTS ONE EXTRA BALLOON.

ALL THE BALLOONS YOU BUY FROM ME ARE GONNA POP EVENTUALLY. JUST YOU WAIT!

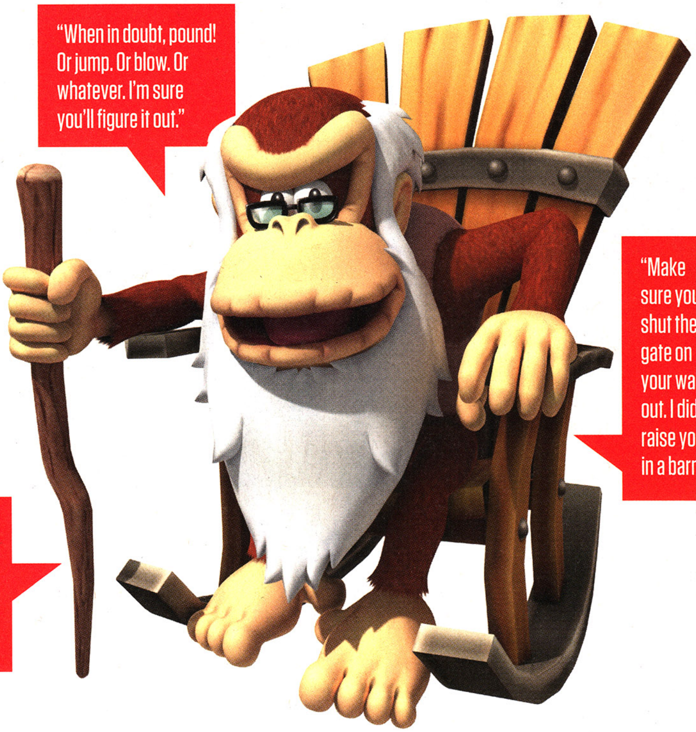
Kong characters, which had swelled to include everything from giant babies to disturbingly voluptuous furry vixens. We much prefer the simplified, back-to-basics cast, which includes only Cranky Kong in addition to Donkey and Diddy (see the sidebar below for more on the ol' geezer gorilla). The game is still lighthearted and funny, but without coming across as a goofy kid's cartoon. One final change that we'll spotlight is the addition of widescreen support, which makes a massive difference here. Whereas the original titles zoomed in close on your character and showed less of the surrounding area than usual for games of this kind, Donkey Kong Country Returns always offers a great view in every direction. The camera also zooms in and out automatically depending on what's around, which also helps.

ISLAND-HOPPING

The game takes place on Donkey Kong Island. It's split into six worlds, each of which contains many like-themed stages (jungle, beach, caves, etc.) that are accessible via a world map. The general setup is the same as in the original Donkey Kong Country and in most Mario games. The Tikis—in probably their most boneheaded move ever—steal Donkey Kong's stash of bananas. What they plan to do with thousands of bananas that will stay ripe for only about a week is beyond us, but needless to say, our favorite ape isn't about to take the theft lying down. There are different routes through each world, so not all levels have to

Crank It Up

Cranky Kong—the aged ape who made his debut in the original Donkey Kong Country—is back to once again hassle his grandson and moan about the good old days. He runs the shops in each world, and if you pay close attention, you'll notice that he occasionally slips a helpful hint in with his grumpy comments. He's probably the only shop owner we've ever met who will question the quality of an item he just sold you.



"When in doubt, pound! Or jump. Or blow. Or whatever. I'm sure you'll figure it out."

"Make sure you shut the gate on your way out. I didn't raise you in a barn!"

"Glad I could help my grandson overcome this deadly challenge in exchange for a little cash money."

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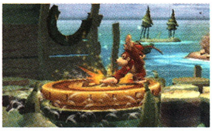
be cleared—although expert players won't rest until they've collected each stage's supply of Puzzle Pieces and K-O-N-G Letters. Many of these items are hidden, some deviously so, as are the entrances to secret bonus rooms where you can stock up on bananas (100 net you an extra life), coins (which can be spent at Cranky Kong's Shop), and Red Balloons (each gives an extra life). Generally speaking, the more stuff you collect, the more extras you unlock, such as concept art, music tracks, and dioramas. And each world has an additional Trophy level that must be earned before it can be played (the requirements for that are still under wraps).

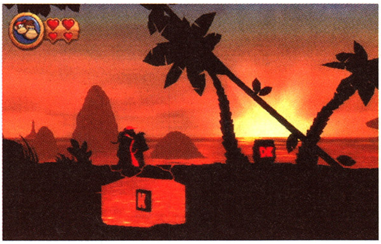
In every world there is a shop where you can spend coins on lives or a key. There's one key in each shop, which corresponds to its world's single locked level. Coins aren't terribly hard to come by, and since tough stages can eat up a lot of lives, expect to visit the shops often—as long as you can stand Cranky Kong's badgering, that is. The old coot tends the shops, and he makes grumpy—and often quite funny—comments on everything you buy.

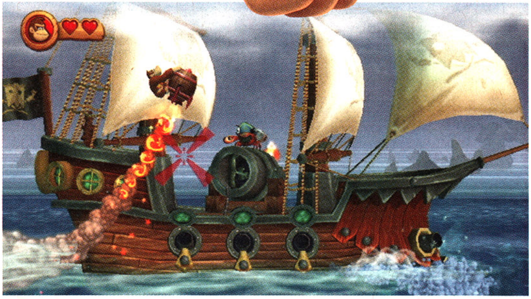
MONKEYING AROUND

Generally, Donkey Kong Country Returns handles just like the old games, right down to the unique feel of jumping, which seems a little floaty compared to Mario's



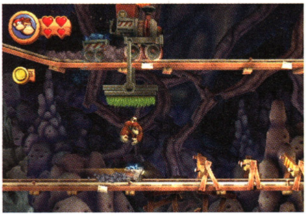
[Above] Pounding the ground can change the environment and reveal new paths. [Below] This early stage is breathtaking.

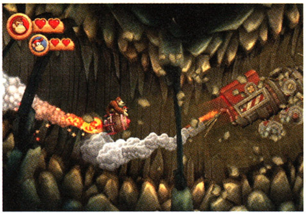


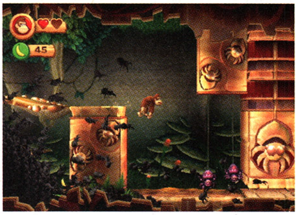


Aaaaargh!

The Donkey Kong Country series is known for its high difficulty level, and the latest installment won't disappoint those looking for a challenge. Here are three of the most infuriating—yet highly enjoyable—areas we've come across.



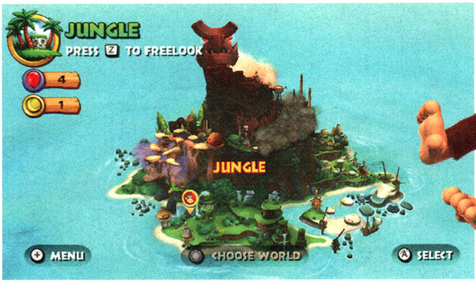




GRIP & TRIP (WORLD 4-2)
Mine cart segments are always tough; you usually have to throw away a lot of lives learning the track and honing your reflexes. On this particular rail ride, you sometimes have to hang from a patch of grass rolling on a rail above you!

MOLE PATROL (WORLD 4-4)
Steering a Rocket Barrel is tricky enough outdoors, but here you must navigate through an incredibly tight tunnel as it is being dug—touch any side just once and it's game over.

MUNCHER MARATHON (5-8)
When Donkey Kong's ground pounding angers a bazillion spiders, he has to keep running to stay ahead of a black wall of squirmy death. The chase goes on for quite some time with very little room for error.



sharp, snappy moves. Tapping the jump button triggers a low hop, while holding it results in a longer leap—an important distinction when judging the various jump distances in mine-cart areas. You can choose to play with both the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers or go old-school with just the remote held horizontally. We tried each style extensively and found both to be great options—it's more satisfying to alternately swing both controllers to Ground Pound (shaking just the remote doesn't do as good a job mimicking the onscreen action), but moving with the Control Pad feels more precise than moving with the Control Stick. In either control scheme, shaking the remote while running makes Donkey Kong roll through enemies like a bowling ball, and shaking while ducking causes him to blow air, which can rustle items from their hiding places or spin small windmills to power certain mechanisms. And when paired with

Gorilla Gear

There are several items that Donkey and Diddy should keep an eye out for in addition to K-O-N-G Letters. Some of these are helpful on the spot while others give bonuses when enough are collected. Here's a list of what to look out for.

BANANAS

Collect 100 of these yummy jungle treats to gain an extra life.

BANANA COIN

Sometimes hidden but often left in plain sight, these coins are fairly common and can be spent at Cranky Kong's Shop.

RED BALLOON

Instantly gives you an extra life, no bananas required.

BARREL

This can be tossed directly at an enemy or rolled along the ground to bowl over multiple foes.

DK BARREL

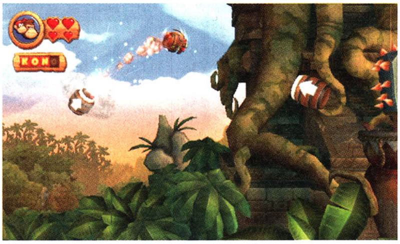
Diddy Kong can be found inside. This barrel can also be smashed into bad guys, but it can't be rolled.

PUZZLE PIECE

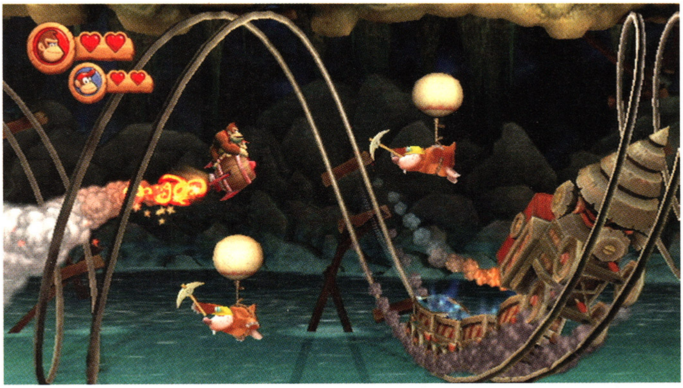
These are the hardest items to find, and there are different amounts in each stage. What do you get for collecting them all? We're not telling.

MINE CART

An essential piece of equipment when the ground ends and the rails begin.



[Above] Barrel-blasting is used in many creative and challenging ways. [Below] Steering a Rocket Barrel isn't easy, but it's fun.

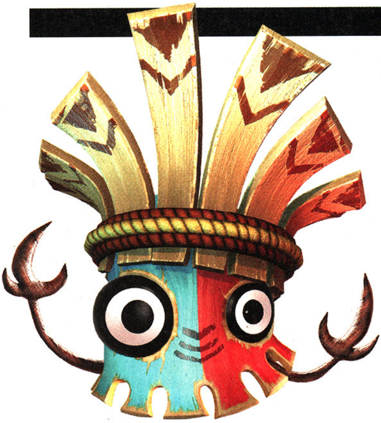


the Barrel-Jet-wearing Diddy Kong—who, in single-player mode, rides on your back after being found in a barrel marked "DK"—Donkey Kong can briefly hover if you continue to hold the jump button. Diddy Kong also extends your roll by running along on top of the balled-up Donkey Kong, allowing you to bowl over enemies endlessly as long as you keep shaking the controller. And finally, a second player can make use of Diddy Kong's Peanut Popgun, which—like Donkey Kong's Ground Pound—temporarily stuns enemies.

There are special controls for special circumstances, such as when flying in a Rocket Barrel (simply hold the jump button to fly upward and let it go to dip down). Other unique actions mirror Donkey Kong's basic controls (such as making a mine cart jump or steering the nigh-invulnerable Rambi the Rhino).

A BARREL OF FUN

At this point, we'd trust Retro Studios with any of Nintendo's top-tier franchises. We could go on and on about the many cool things we've come across while exploring the game's long list of levels, but we'll save those details for the many screens on these pages. Suffice it to say we're giddy about this game. It should be a holiday gift-giving priority for not only Donkey Kong Country fans, but for anyone who likes platformers—particularly New Super Mario Bros. Wii, which seems to have been the blueprint for how the Donkey Kong Country series was revived. With a legendary lineage, addictive gameplay, and a lengthy long-term challenge, it's on like... well, you know.



Tiki Trouble

Does the Tiki Tak Tribe even eat bananas, or did they steal Donkey Kong's stash simply to stir things up? Either way, you can bet that they've bitten off more than they can chew. Take a look at a few of their faces before giant ape fists make them unrecognizable.

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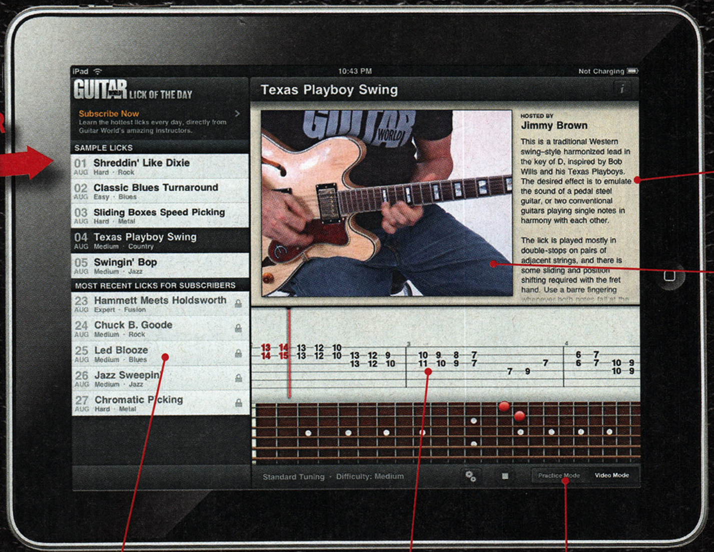
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Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing-style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering whenever both notes fall at the

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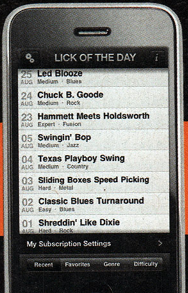
LICK OF THE DAY
- 25 Led Blooze — AUG Medium · Blues
- 24 Chuck B. Goode — AUG Medium · Rock
- 23 Hammett Meets Holdsworth — AUG Expert · Fusion
- 05 Swingin' Bop — AUG Medium · Jazz
- 04 Texas Playboy Swing — AUG Medium · Country
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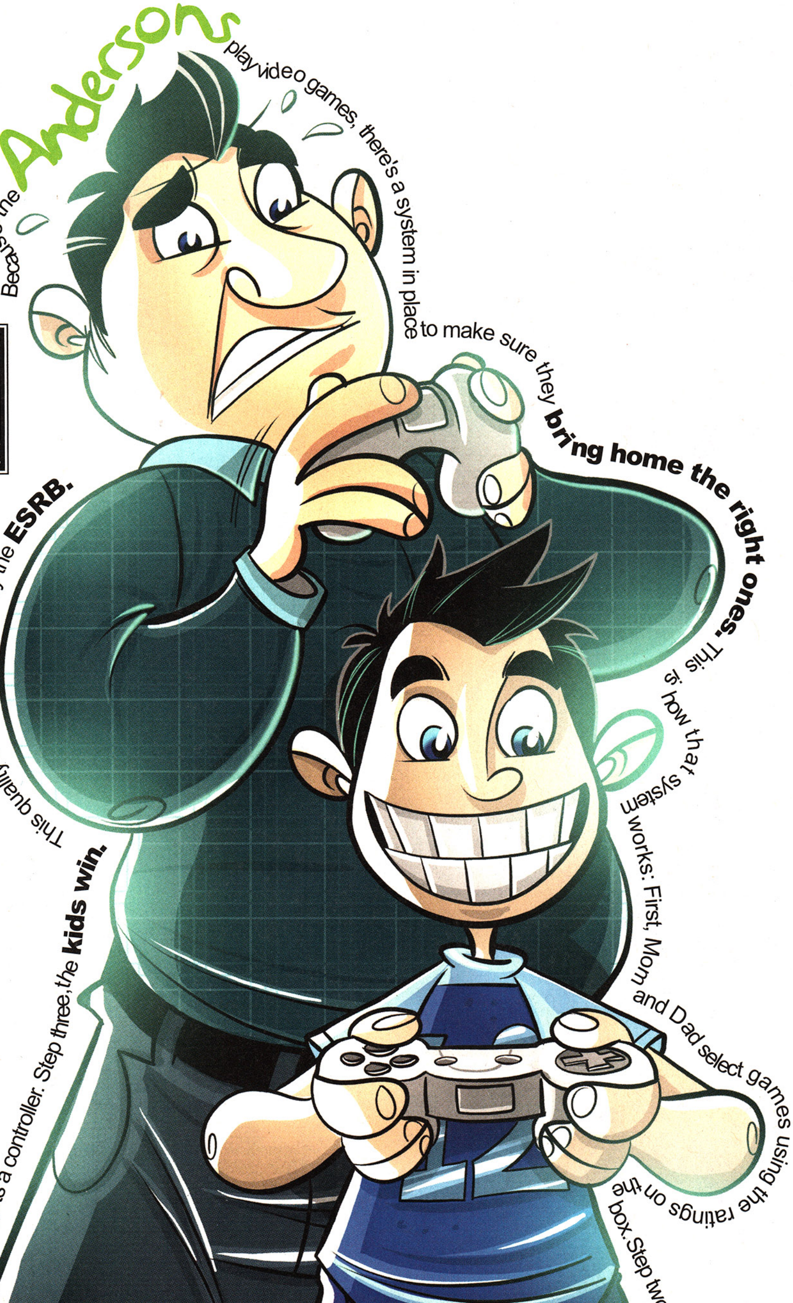

Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step tw

everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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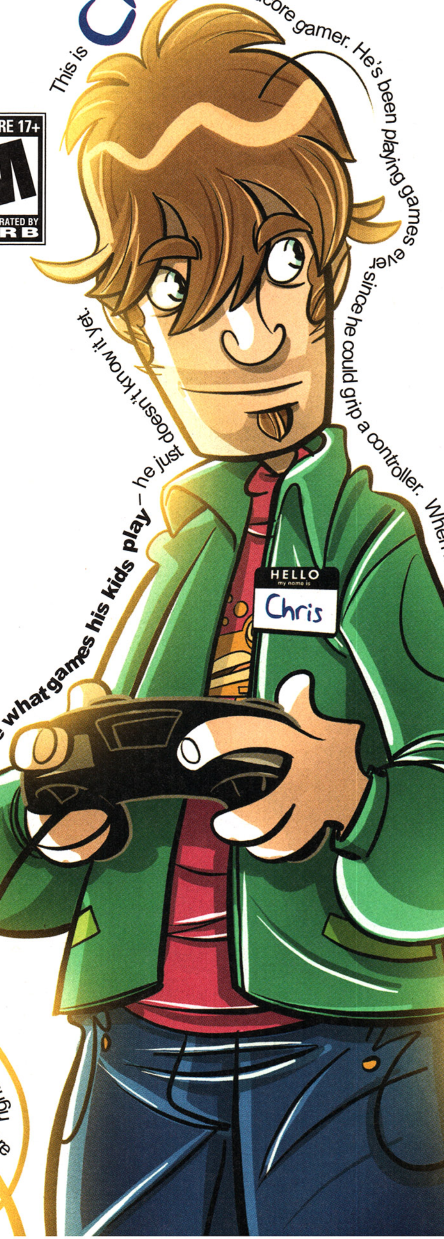
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB



This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB** ratings to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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NEW HORIZON

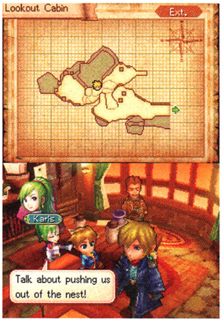
Nintendo and Camelot reunite for the first time in more than seven years to bring us Golden Sun: Dark Dawn. Can the latest chapter in their role-playing opus shine as brightly as its predecessors?

BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **CAMELOT** RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010** DS

The Nintendo DS system has proven fertile ground for role-playing games—especially of the Japanese variety—but one name has been conspicuous by its absence: Golden Sun. Considered by most to be the preeminent RPG saga on the Game Boy Advance, the series seemed like a lock to continue on Nintendo's latest handheld platform. Then years passed without any word of a new installment, and it started to look like we'd never visit the fantastical land of Weyard again. Fortunately, those dark clouds have finally parted; Golden Sun is set to make its DS debut in November. We've played the first few hours of this long-awaited follow-up, and the early forecast is pretty bright.

HP 92
PP 34
HP 68
PP 67
HP 82
PP 29
L
R



Talk about pushing us out of the nest!

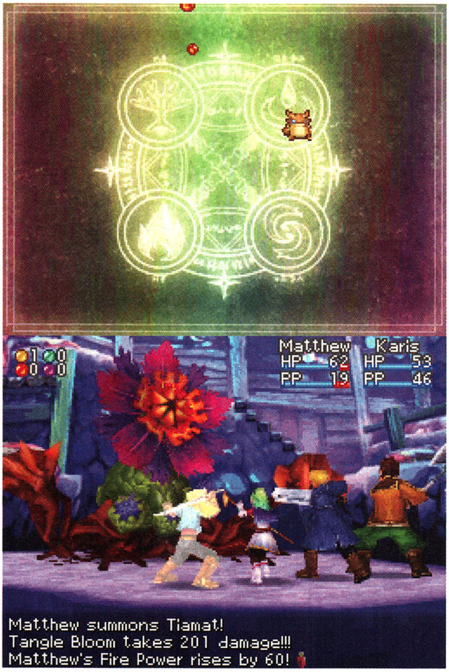
CARRY ON MY WEYARD SON

Golden Sun: Dark Dawn takes place 30 years after the events of the two prior games, in which the heroes saved their dying world by restoring the life-giving power of Alchemy and creating the Golden Sun. Not all is hunky-dory in Weyard, however. The chaos of rebirth has ravaged the land with natural disasters, leaving its people desperate and fighting for survival. As the game begins, we find Isaac and Garet (two of the heroes from the original Golden Sun) living in a cabin near Mount Aleph, the epicenter of the destruction. While keeping a watchful eye on the mountain, they train Isaac's son Matthew and Garet's son Tyrell. Like their fathers, Matthew and Tyrell are Adepts, which means they can control the elements using magical powers called Psynergy.

Fans of the series will no doubt be intrigued by this direct continuation of its story, but Dark Dawn also does a great job of bringing newcomers up to speed. In addition to a prologue that covers all of the big-picture stuff, the game boasts a brilliantly implemented encyclopedia function. During conversations, you can tap certain words with your stylus to view a brief description of that subject on the top screen. Even for returning players, that comes in quite handy when trying to keep track of a fiction as richly detailed as Golden Sun's.

Isaac and Garet accompany our new heroes on the game's opening excursion, which doubles as a tutorial, but after that Matthew, Tyrell, and their friend Karis are sent out on their own. The trio's first task is to rendezvous with Kraden, the crusty old scholar who played a prominent role in the previous games (and who, quite frankly, we're surprised to learn is still alive).

The interplay between generations makes for a compelling entry point and helps endear the new cast to us from the get-go. Matthew serves as the main protagonist, and though he never actually speaks, you can convey his feelings on important topics of conversation by tapping one of four emoticons: happy, excited, sad, or angry. Your choices don't seem to have any repercussions beyond the kinds of responses they elicit, but at least it feels like Matthew is actually participating in the story—a rarity for silent heroes.

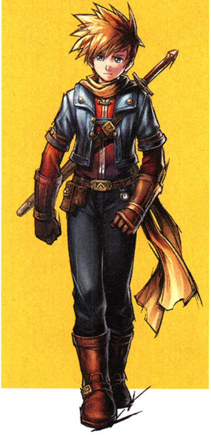


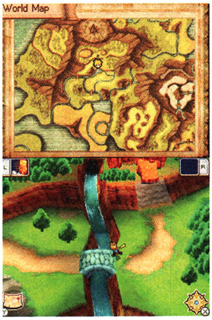
Matthew summons Tiamat!
Tangle Bloom takes 201 damage!!!
Matthew's Fire Power rises by 60!

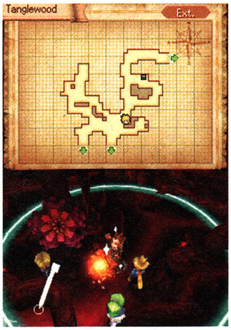
At the beginning of the game, original Golden Sun heroes Isaac and Garet fight alongside our new protagonists. Even though you can't control the veterans, it's cool seeing them in action again. And they certainly haven't let themselves go; their attacks are insanely powerful!

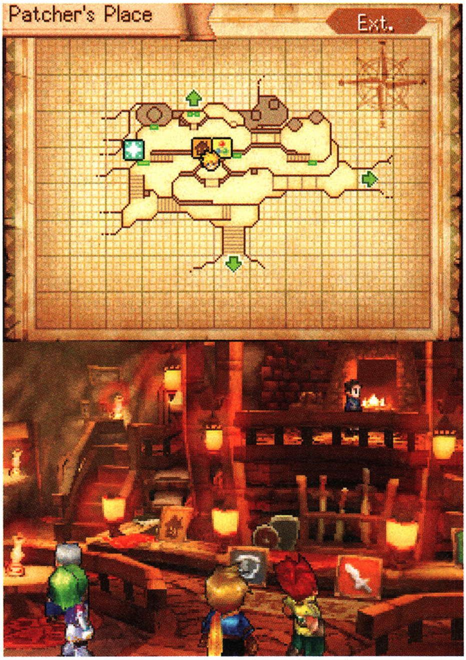
Matthew

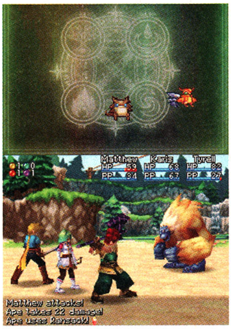
As Dark Dawn's main hero, Matthew follows in the footsteps of his father Isaac, who led the Warriors of Vale in the original Golden Sun. Matthew is a promising Earth Adept and a person of few words but strong convictions.











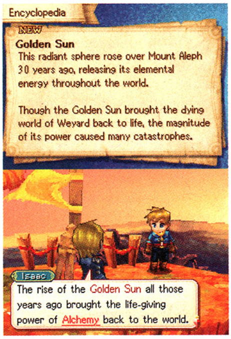
Matthew attacks!
Ape takes 22 damage!
Ape uses Ransack!

FAMILIAR SHINE

By and large, Dark Dawn follows the conventional RPG structure. You travel Weyard via world map, visit towns, and explore dungeons. Its environmental puzzles have always separated Golden Sun from the pack, and this new chapter is no different. Your path is littered with all sorts of obstacles, and getting past them typically requires the use of Psynergy. In the early portions of the game, your Psynergy allows you to move objects from afar, grow vines, launch fireballs, and create whirlwinds. The puzzles start out fairly simple, but as you acquire additional abilities during your travels, the challenges grow increasingly complex. The biggest head-scratchers are usually found on the optional detours that lead to some powerful new item or a Djinni. (More on the latter in a moment.)

Coming out of E3, we had some concerns about the stylus-driven Psynergy controls, but we're pleased to report that they've improved significantly. To help you get the hang of them, the first village hosts a Psynergy training ground/theme park, which humorously "re-creates" the highlights of the first two games via pulleys and plywood. For character movement, you can use either the stylus or the Control Pad—always a welcome option.

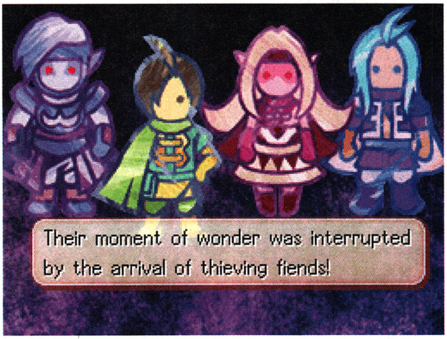
Dark Dawn's battle system sticks to the old-school sensibilities of its predecessors. Combat is turn-based and menu-driven, with the two sides lined up across from each other. You can attack, defend, use items, and cast spells (or, in this case, Psynergy), exactly



Golden Sun
This radiant sphere rose over Mount Aleph 30 years ago, releasing its elemental energy throughout the world.

Though the Golden Sun brought the dying world of Weyard back to life, the magnitude of its power caused many catastrophes.

The rise of the Golden Sun all those years ago brought the life-giving power of Alchemy back to the world.

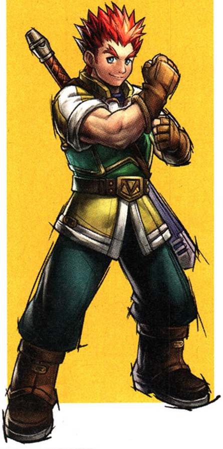


Their moment of wonder was interrupted by the arrival of thieving fiends!

[Above] Throughout the game, you can find hidden books that retell the stories of the first two Golden Suns in picture book form.

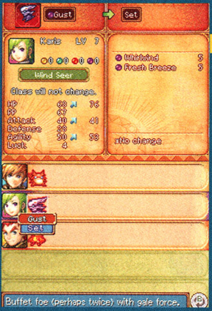
Tyrell

Tyrell is a Fire Adept like his father Garet, and he's Matthew's best friend. He's impulsive and has a bit of a temper, which has earned him a reputation for being a troublemaker.



Harnessing the Elements

As in previous Golden Sun titles, your party can enlist help from Djinn, diminutive spirits that represent the four elements of earth, wind, fire, and water. Some will join you willingly, and others only after a fight. Making effective use of these allies requires careful strategy and can mean the difference between life and death. Here's how they work:



Class will not change.

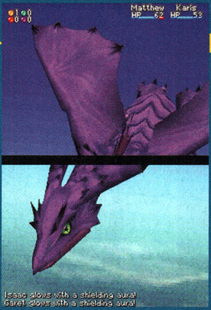
HP 68 76
PP 67
Attack 40 41
Defense 28
Agility 50 58
Luck 4

*No change

Buffet foe (perhaps twice) with gale force.

SET

Each Djinni must be paired with a party member (though you can mix up the pairings between battles). Once you've established a duo, selecting the Set command sort of acts like equipping the Djinni and affects the corresponding character's class, stats, and available Psynergy. It also allows you to unleash the spirit's unique special ability during combat. One Djinni can erect a magical barrier, for instance, while another can temporarily blind your foes. After that special ability is utilized, however, the Djinni automatically moves to Standby status.



Isaac glows with a shielding aura!
Garet glows with a shielding aura!

STANDBY

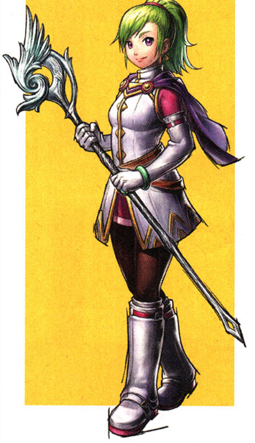
When a Djinni is on Standby, its partner character loses the Djinni's benefits, but the little guy can be used to summon powerful elemental guardians. And the more Djinn you have on Standby, the greater the guardian you can call upon. Summons have always provided some of the most spectacular visuals in the series, and Dark Dawn takes things up a notch with extravagant sequences that unfold across both screens. As an added bonus, the character that does the summoning will receive a corresponding elemental boost for the remainder of the battle.

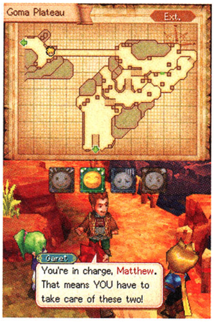
RECOVERY

Any Djinni used to summon a guardian must spend some time in a Recovery phase before it automatically returns to the Set condition. You can also change a Djinni's status manually—from Set to Standby and vice versa—between skirmishes. The key is to manage the various tradeoffs. Having Djinn on Standby may allow you to call in the heavy artillery, but it leaves your party more vulnerable.

Karis

This young Wind Adept is Ivan's daughter and has inherited her father's indomitable spirit and powers of observation. She's known Matthew and Tyrell for a long time, and visits them often.





You're in charge, Matthew. That means YOU have to take care of these two!

as you'd expect from a traditional RPG. Golden Sun does add a bit of a wrinkle to that formula with Djinn, little elemental spirits that assist your party and involve a variety of tactical considerations. (For a more detailed explanation of how they work, see the "Harnessing the Elements" sidebar.) Your characters can also earn attack bonuses as they get accustomed to using certain weapons. Equipped with the short bow, for instance, Karis will eventually learn a double shot. Despite being turn-based, combat feels snappy; you can take as much time as you want to make your decisions, of course, but the results play out quickly. And the random encounters are never so frequent that they become an annoyance.

Perhaps Dark Dawn's biggest departure from the GBA titles is the switch from hand-drawn sprites to polygons. Whether or not that's a good thing is a matter of taste, but the environments boast an impressive level of detail and Camelot has managed to retain the franchise's visual charm. The change also lets the developers move the camera around, which allows for a more dynamic presentation of combat and in-game cut-scenes. On the whole, the graphics aren't quite at the same level as, say, some of Square Enix's best work on the handheld, but they're certainly no slouch. The music is unequivocally good, combining familiar themes with some excellent new compositions.

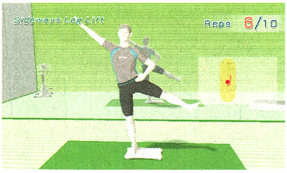
If a lot of Dark Dawn sounds like more of the same, keep in mind that Golden Sun has never been about innovation. The franchise's appeal has always come from combining highly polished, tried-and-true gameplay with a compelling mythology, interesting characters, and the occasional plot twist. This new installment unabashedly continues down that path, and at a time when other popular series are constantly trying to reinvent the wheel, there's something comforting about a game that sticks with what works.

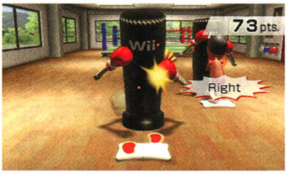
GAME CHANGERS

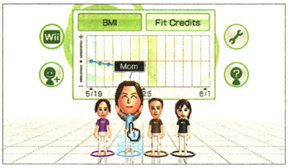
Thirteen Nintendo-published titles that redefined the gaming industry

A lot of video games can be called great. There are even a good number that can be classified as innovative. But very few can be considered truly influential—games so great, so innovative, and so groundbreaking that they establish new gaming paradigms and inspire nearly every game maker around the world. Over the years, many of the most influential games have come from none other than Nintendo—from Super Mario Bros. to the Pokémon series to Wii Fit. On the following pages we'll present to you the 13 most influential Nintendo-published games, ranked by how important they've been in shaping the gaming universe.

BY PHIL THEOBALD & CASEY LOE







BRINGING THE GYM HOME TO STAY

13. Wii Fit

2008, Wii

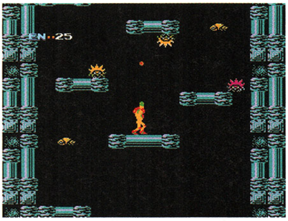
The wide acceptance of the Wii console suggested that consumers were interested in more physical ways of interacting with their video game systems. A couple of years after Wii launched, Wii Fit proved the theory by selling 20 million wireless Balance Board peripherals and bringing the home-fitness genre to the top of the best-seller charts. The game's popularity had an immediate effect on the industry, spawning a sequel and inspiring other publishers to bring physical activity home to Wii. In the two years since Wii Fit debuted, publishers have scored a series of hits with yoga, dancing, cheerleading, and snowboarding games, as well as gym-fitness variations based on half a dozen different celebrity trainers. That's an incredible amount of success for such a young genre—and with future generations of high-quality exercise equipment like the Balance Board, who knows how far it could go?

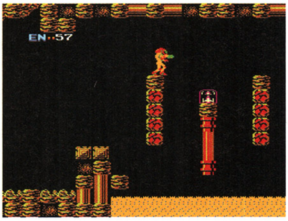
INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

EA Sports Active: More Workouts

Just Dance

Jillian Michaels' Fitness Ultimatum





QUIETLY CREATING A NEW GENRE

12. Metroid

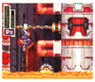
1987, NES

Metroid was a bit of an oddity when it was first released. It relied too much on shooting and accurate jumping to be a pure adventure game like The Legend of Zelda, but it wasn't quite linear enough to be a platform game like Super Mario Bros. Instead, it ended up being branded with the nebulous "action-adventure" label. It wasn't until years later, when Konami co-opted Metroid's formula for its Castlevania series, that fans coined the term Metroidvania to describe the games' unique blend of side-view exploration, fast action, and item-based power-ups.

Did Nintendo realize that it was creating a new classification of games when it introduced Samus to the world? Probably not, but it certainly knew that it had a good thing going. With Super Metroid for the Super NES, Nintendo refined (some might say perfected) what made the original so great. If you're playing an action game that has a little more depth than similar titles, you probably have Metroid to thank for it.

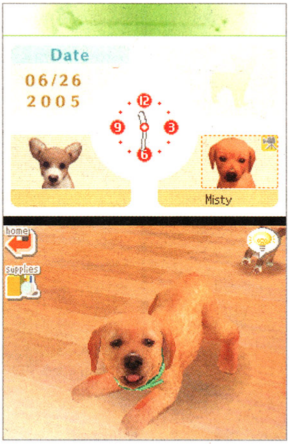
INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night



Mega Man ZX

Shantae: Risky's Revenge



POPULARIZING VIRTUAL-PET VIDEO GAMES

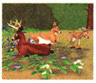
11. Nintendogs

2005, Nintedo DS

Virtual pets were not a new phenomenon when Nintendogs debuted on the Nintendo DS handheld. The Tamagotchi, Bandai's popular egg-shaped digital companion, had already been around for almost 10 years. By 2005, however, virtual-pet mania had died down. Nintendogs not only reinvigorated the genre, but moved it to game systems instead of self-contained LCD devices.

Sure, the multiple breeds of puppies in Nintendogs were adorable, but they also behaved realistically. The capabilities of the Nintendo DS even permitted players to interact with their virtual pets in ways that they never could before. The touch screen allowed gamers to feel like they were really bathing and petting their dog, and the system's microphone let the puppies respond to their owner's voice. This level of interaction made the digital animals all the more endearing. Not surprisingly, Nintendogs opened the floodgates for a deluge of imitators. You can now get video games with virtual pets ranging from piñatas to horses to sharks.

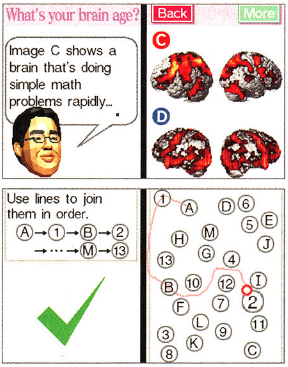
INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:



SimAnimals

Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise

Monster Tale


What's your brain age?
Back
More
Image C shows a brain that's doing simple math problems rapidly...
C
D
Use lines to join them in order.
A→1→B→2
→…→M→13

CRACKING THE PUZZLE OF NONTRADITIONAL GAMERS

10. Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day

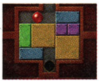
2006, Nintendo DS

Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes A Day didn't look anything like a smash hit. But somehow a collection of simple puzzles with a stripped-down presentation became the surprise story of the Nintendo DS generation and inspired a massive boom in educational and self-help software. Most impressively, Brain Age broke through the usual demographics of young male gamers to resonate strongly with women, businessmen, and the elderly.

The success of Brain Age led to hundreds of imitators, particularly in Japan. In addition to scores of brain-training knock-offs, a flood of hastily produced educational titles offered to teach players about stocks, etiquette, jury duty, and wine appreciation. Some succeeded, but most did not. The ultimate lesson of Brain Age isn't yet clear; while the title has proven that publishers can break through to the millions of customers with no interest in traditional games, it hasn't provided much insight about how to do so consistently.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Big Brain Academy: Wii Degree



Professor Layton and the Curious Village

Art Academy

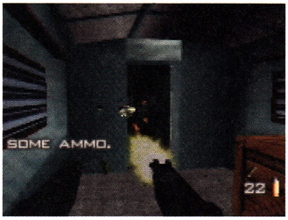
MAKING THE FPS A CONSOLE MAINSTAY

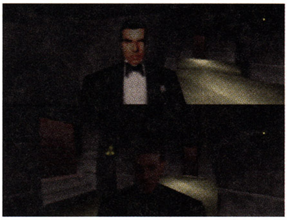
9. GoldenEye 007

1997, Nintendo 64

Although first-person shooters are incredibly popular on consoles these days, there was a time when they were mostly relegated to PCs. Game consoles, it was believed, were not powerful enough to handle these polygonal games. Nor were their Control Pad-equipped controllers capable of allowing players to effectively move through the games' worlds. That all changed with the release of the Nintendo 64. It ushered in an era in which consoles were capable of displaying impressive polygonal graphics, and the N64's analog controller made movement a breeze.

GoldenEye 007 proved to be the perfect game to introduce the FPS genre to the console crowd. In addition to the great graphics and control, it featured excellent level design and challenging goals. The split-screen multiplayer mode was also a tremendous addition that gave the title plenty of replay value. FPS games come and go, but the fact that this one is so fondly remembered nearly 15 years later shows how influential it was.



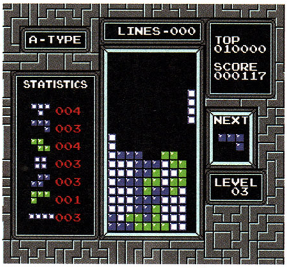


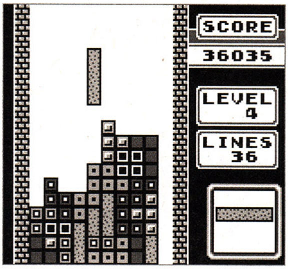
INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Metroid Prime

Call of Duty: World at War

The Conduit





INSPIRING COUNTLESS PUZZLE GAMES

8. Tetris

1989, NES/Game Boy

Here's how influential Tetris is: there's a traditional Russian folk song named "Korobeiniki" that was written way back in 1861. Despite having been around for about 150 years, it would likely be recognized by most people only as "The Tetris Song." A version of the catchy tune was used as the song "Type A" in the Game Boy version of Tetris.

Of course, Tetris didn't just influence the public's perception of Russian culture; it affected gaming, too. To succeed in Tetris, you needed not only quick reflexes, but a quick mind as well. The game's simple rules and challenging gameplay made it instantly addictive. Factor in the game's inclusion with the original Game Boy, and suddenly everyone was playing Tetris. The game's popularity spawned an endless stream of "falling block"-style puzzle games that continues to this day.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Dr. Mario

Columns

Puyo Pop

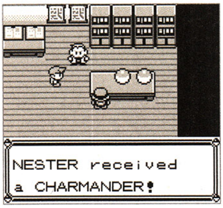
MAKING CATCHING THEM ALL A WAY OF LIFE

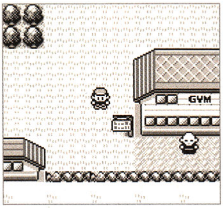
7. Pokémon Red Version and Pokémon Blue Version

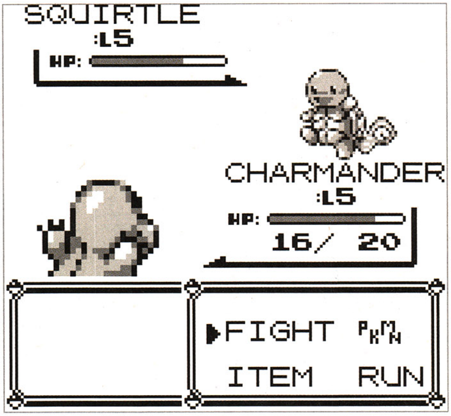
1998, Game Boy

"How many have you caught?" "Do you have a Pikachu to trade?" "Did you find Mewtwo yet?" These were the important questions being asked on playgrounds in the late '90s as kids (and adults) the world over were falling under the spell of the addictively charming Pokémon. Sure, the craze was fueled by a TV series, movies, a trading-card game, and toys and dolls up the wazoo, but the video game was what really brought people into the world of Pokémon.

The core gameplay of the standard Pokémon titles is actually a fairly basic RPG. Players were drawn in by the game's collection aspect, which was heavily promoted with the slogan "Gotta Catch 'Em All!" This got fans hooked, causing them to spend dozens (if not hundreds) of hours attempting to complete their Pokédexes. It wasn't long before plenty of other games had players collecting little critters or trading cards in order to battle.


NESTER received a CHARMANDER!

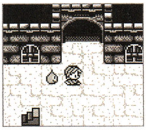


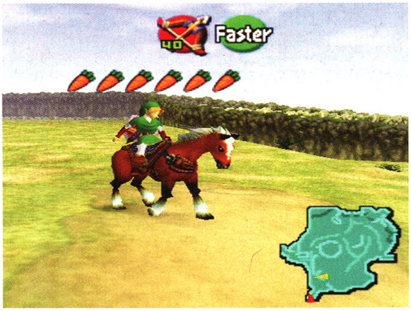


INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Yu-Gi-Oh! Dark Duel Stories

Mega Man Battle Network


Dragon Quest Monsters



TAKING THE REINS OF 3D

6. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

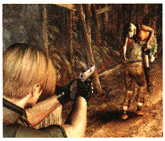
1998, Nintendo 64

In the early days of the Nintendo 64 generation, fans worried that 3D gameplay would be a terrible fit for The Legend of Zelda. How would players navigate a polygonal world with the same intuitive controls they'd become accustomed to? How would the camera know when to zoom in for sword-fighting or pull back for archery? How could chunky polygonal models possibly capture the charm of such beloved hand-drawn characters?

Somehow Nintendo had these questions all answered by Ocarina of Time's 1998 release date, though the same issues would bedevil other developers for years to come. New features like the game's lock-on camera and context-sensitive controls were revolutionary for their time, and were quickly copied throughout the industry. But the true impact of Ocarina of Time came not from its gameplay innovations, but from the way it used new technology to immerse players into a world of wide vistas and stirring sunrises, and to provoke visceral reactions that had never been possible before. Ocarina of Time was the poster child for the potential of polygonal gaming, and it inspired game fans and developers for decades to come.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

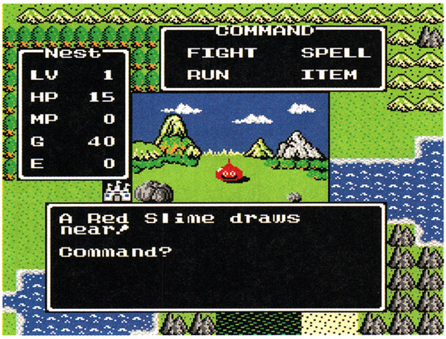
Resident Evil 4



Star Fox Adventures

Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days

COMMANDS
Attack
Magic



Nest
LV 1
HP 15
MP 0
G 40
E 0

A Red Slime draws near!
Command?

MAPPING THE DNA OF RPGS

5. Dragon Warrior

NES, 1989

Dragon Warrior may be one of the most influential games ever made, but it's likely the least innovative title on this list. Its mechanics came straight from popular PC RPGs like Wizardry and Ultima, and its world and story show a heavy influence from Dungeons & Dragons. The genius of director Yuji Horii wasn't in creation, but in execution; he took a genre that had been dismissed as being too complicated for a mass-market audience and too technically demanding for the NES, and refined it into an elegant and inviting game that could be intuitively controlled with a game pad.

Dragon Warrior was a success of unprecedented proportions in Japan (where it went by its original name of Dragon Quest), inspiring dozens of sequels and spin-offs and hundreds of imitators. The mechanics and interface that Horii had selected became the de facto standard of Japanese-developed RPGs—even 20 years later, traces of Dragon Warrior's combat system, interface, and structure can be found in nearly every console RPG.

Note that in Japan, Dragon Warrior was published by Enix.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Final Fantasy

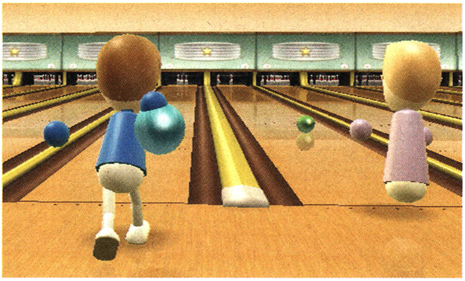
Phantasy Star

Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars

PROVING THE VIABILITY OF MOTION CONTROLS

4. Wii Sports

2006, Wii



Four years after the Wii console's debut, it seems hard to imagine that there was a time when some people were skeptical of the system's dedication to motion-controlled gameplay. Detractors called the Wii Remote controller a gimmick, and others worried that motion controls would mark the death of "real" games. They continued to cry doom and gloom as Wii was released, but nobody heard the complaints—everyone was too busy having fun bowling in Wii Sports.

Obviously, motion control didn't replace the ol' Control Pad and analog stick, but it did provide an exciting new way to interact with games. Wii Sports was the perfect title to introduce the new interface. The multiple sports featured in the game were familiar, and the motion controls were intuitive. People who couldn't wrap their minds around traditional controllers and their many button-press combinations definitely understood how to swing a virtual tennis racket, opening up the world of gaming to everyone.

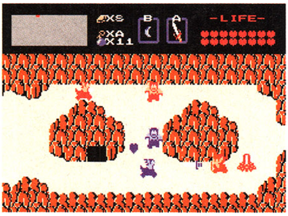
And if you need further proof of the influence Wii Sports has had on gaming, take note of how those "other systems" are just starting to catch on to the advantages of motion control.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Red Steel 2

Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword



CREATING ITS OWN GENRE AND THEN SOME

3. The Legend of Zelda

1987, NES

The action-RPG genre is a vague one, promising nothing more than a mix of role-playing and action elements. But when you say "a Zelda-style game," everyone knows exactly what you mean: real-time sword combat, puzzle-packed dungeons, an open world overflowing with obstacles, and an inventory full of items that have imaginative uses. The original Zelda was so popular that it spawned scores of imitators, from transparent rip-offs like Neutopia and Shining Wisdom to more imaginative takes like Beyond Oasis, Illusion of Gaia, and the recent Okami.

None of these games came anywhere close to achieving the stature of The Legend of Zelda, and now that publishers have learned that you can't out-Zelda Zelda, few bother to try. However, Zelda's influence lives on in more indirect ways; its core structure has been cited as an inspiration for such diverse games as Prince of Persia, God of War, and the upcoming Epic Mickey. Zelda's reach has extended far beyond its own niche to offer powerful lessons about encouraging exploration and experimentation in any style of game.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Ico

Okami

Epic Mickey

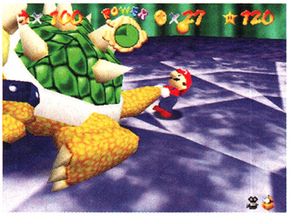
DEFINING 3D GAMING

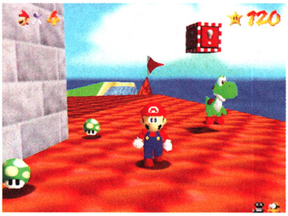
2. Super Mario 64

1996, Nintendo 64

In the mid '90s, 3D console gaming was in its infancy. Game systems were becoming vastly more powerful than in previous generations, and game makers were still learning what to do with the machines' potential. Some genres were able to make the transition with little difficulty. Racing games, for example, were often presented in a pseudo-3D perspective anyway. But how does one bring a traditionally 2D genre—such as a platformer—into the third dimension? Make it like Super Mario 64; that's how.

Although the layout of the worlds and their goals are quite a bit different from Mario's side-scrolling titles, Super Mario 64 managed to retain the feel of the series. You may not have been bashing tons of ? Blocks or collecting mushrooms to grow, but the smooth control and creative level design always reminded you that you were playing a Mario title. Not surprisingly, other developers took cues from Super Mario 64 when creating their own 3D platformers, adventures, and action games.



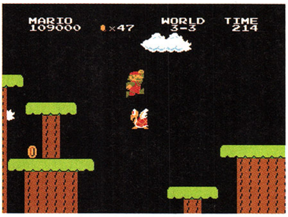


INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

Sonic Adventure

Spyro the Dragon

Banjo-Kazooie



THE GODFATHER OF PLATFORMING

1. Super Mario Bros.

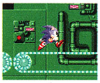
1985, NES

Super Mario Bros. had a 24-year run as the best-selling video game in history (until it was unseated by Wii Sports last year). With success like that, it's not surprising that there's been no shortage of imitators. And with revolutionary turns in so many aspects of game design, Super Mario Bros. offered plenty of innovations to build upon.

While not the first side-scrolling platformer, Super Mario Bros. offered play mechanics that were light-years beyond those of its contemporaries. The ability to carefully modulate the height of Mario's jump and the speed of his run added an intuitive and visceral thrill to a genre that had been marred by both stiff and flailing controls. While games in its day had occasional secrets, Super Mario Bros. packed its levels with hidden passages and surprises that kept players hooked long after the princess had been rescued. Super Mario Bros. cemented the side-scrolling platformer as the most popular genre of its era, and taught the industry how to make action games with longevity.

INFLUENCED SUCH GAMES AS:

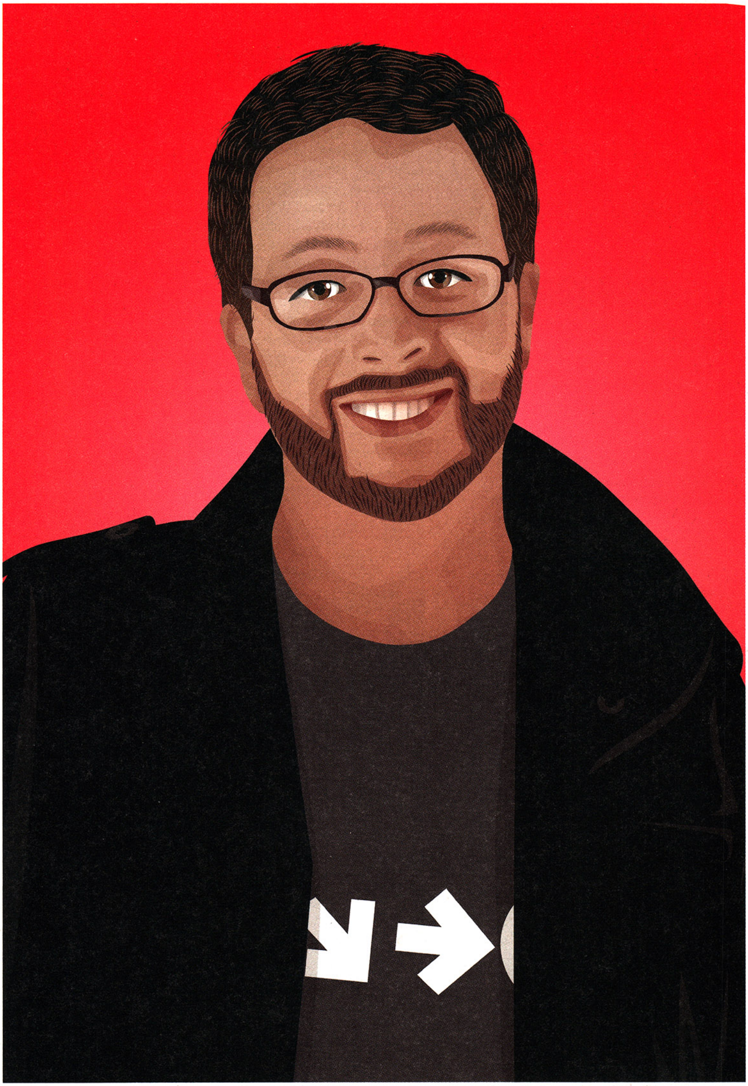
Bonk's Adventure


Sonic the Hedgehog

Donkey Kong Country

45

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
June 7, 1976

BIRTHPLACE
Iowa City, Iowa

POSITION
Strategic director, online and community, and special combat advisor, Capcom

BEST KNOWN FOR
Communicating with the fans; having a final boss named after him

FAVORITE FOOD
Garlic bread

CURRENT PROJECTS
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition, Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Seth Killian

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Most hardcore video game players have thought about how cool it would be to work at one of their favorite gaming companies. Capcom's Seth Killian didn't just think about it; he did it. As one of the most prominent professionals in the online gaming community, Killian creates interaction between Capcom and its fans both over the Internet and at events, which the company then uses to improve its games. And when he's not doing that, he's using his world-class fighting-game expertise to help fine-tune titles such as Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars. Capcom even used his name for the final boss in Street Fighter IV! If you're at all active in online gaming fandom, chances are you've talked to or heard from Killian...perhaps before he kicked your virtual butt.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into video games?
SETH KILLIAN I grew up in the arcades. Even as a very little kid I was totally mesmerized by games like Ms. Pac Man, and I played them every chance I could get, with every quarter I could scrounge up. They actually kept me in great shape growing up—since arcade cabinets were illegal in my town, I had to ride my bike a long way to get to the games. I moved on to the NES, where I put in countless hours. Believe it or not, I'm still learning new tricks for the original Punch-Out!! (People don't even realize how deep that game is!)

And how did you end up turning that love of video games into your current job at Capcom?
I used to go to E3 every year to check out the new games, and I'd always meet up with my friends at the Capcom booth at the end of the day (we would play their SF2 Hyper Fighting cabinet while we waited for everyone to show up). I'd already been playing in and helping to organize big Street Fighter tournaments at that time, and my friend suggested, "Hey, while we're waiting why don't you go ask Capcom for some stuff to give away at the tournament?" It was a good idea, so I did. They told me to buzz off. They told me to buzz off the next year too. The third year, however, I managed to talk to the right person. Not only did Capcom end up supporting the tournament, they eventually offered me a job.

What was your secret to becoming such a skilled player?
I didn't have a lot of money growing up, so I basically couldn't afford to lose. Since there were always lines around the SF2 machine, I took the time waiting in line to really think about why some people would always win, and why others would lose, even if they could do all the moves, then try and apply that to my own game.

I understand you have a degree in philosophy. How does that come in handy when you're kicking people's butts in Street Fighter?
Mostly I think philosophy is a helpful way of getting outside of yourself, and seeing a situation (any situation) from a variety of perspectives. There's no question you can apply that to Street Fighter.

What separates a good fighting game from a bad one?
There are a million ways a fighting game can go bad, but in general, bad fighters degenerate with one technique or character dominating all the others in every case. It turns into a game like rock-paper-scissors, only rock beats scissors *and* paper. If you want to win, you just do rock all the time, and that's no fun. It's the same for fighters.

A lot of people might tell you balance is the key to greatness. While that plays a role, I don't think it's that simple. Even games that are pretty far from what you might consider balanced can still be epically great fighters. Ultimately what makes people fall in love is the characters, and keeping them fun and full of personality. It's easy to get balance by producing carbon copies of nearly identical characters, but you want that personality, which is really what has made Street Fighter such an icon.

What do you do when it comes to giving your input to help perfect Capcom's games?
I pick my shots carefully, but mostly my focus is on elements like controls and balance. We talk big ideas sometimes, but I'm happiest digging around in the dirty details. Talking about speeding up a move by two frames doesn't sound sexy, but sometimes details like that can add up and make all the difference.

How has your perspective on the gaming industry changed from when you were a fan now that you're looking at things from the other side?
I see a lot of "bigger picture" elements that can shape a corporate strategy, and how internal politics and personalities can affect decisions, but mostly I work hard to *not* let my "insider" knowledge change the way I think too much. I never want to lose that crazy love for the games that brought me this far. You can't appreciate fully the feelings of your fans if you're not still a fan yourself.

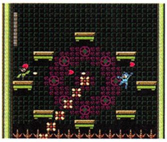
"I never want to lose that crazy love for the games that brought me this far."

How did you end up getting your name used for the final boss of Street Fighter IV? And why did they end up calling the boss Seth instead of Killian? Because to be honest, that sounds a lot scarier.
When they made that choice there was kind of a carnival atmosphere going on in development. I was really happy to be working with the team, everything

GAMEOGRAPHY

As a Capcom community manager, Killian is involved with promoting a wide variety of titles, but his fighting-game prowess has allowed him to contribute to game development as well.

ZACK & WIKI: QUEST FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE
2007, Wii
COMMUNITY AND WEB RELATIONS

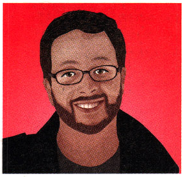


MEGA MAN 9
2008, Wii
COMMUNITY AND WEB RELATIONS

STREET FIGHTER IV
2009, PLAYSTATION 3/XBOX 360
SPECIAL ADVISOR

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS
2010, Wii
SPECIAL ADVISOR

Power Profiles



was going really well, and we were making a lot of progress, so it was a kind of high-five and "welcome to the team!" kind of thing. Beyond being extremely generous to me, they also felt "Seth" sounded exotic ("Seth" is totally unpronounceable in Japanese—they say "Sesu"), plus it had some biblical, serious-sounding overtones.

What do you think has caused the current resurgence in the popularity of 2D fighting games?
Fighters were always great games, but they got self-involved and gave people an excuse to forget about them. They alienated new players for the sake of adding more and more complicated mechanics to challenge longtime fans. The secret of today's resurgence is to realize you don't have to make a supercomplicated game to make a great game—it's very possible to have a deep, fun experience with rules everyone can understand and master pretty quickly. So I think the games were always great, and it's been my mission at Capcom to help people remember and celebrate what's so great about them.

How has the input of the online fan community influenced game marketing or development?
Almost every general change made to Super SFIV was the direct result of fan feedback, from character additions to online modes. I'd say that's pretty significant, and that's just one of many, many examples. The best part is that Capcom has a lot more surprises in store on that front—we're planning some things that will take fan input to levels never seen before in the industry.

What are you looking forward to most about Super Street Fighter IV coming to the Nintendo 3DS handheld?
Honestly, Super SFIV is just jaw-dropping on the 3DS. I was skeptical when I heard the concept, but it looks so good, and creates such an interesting new way to play that it's a perfect combination of the familiar with the new. Since the SNES was *the* formative Street Fighter experience for so many people, it's really great to see the first name in fighting games coming home to Nintendo.

Who are your favorite characters to play in Super Street Fighter IV and Tatsunoko vs. Capcom?
My favorite character in SSFIV these days in El Fuerte. He's not my best character by a long shot, but I've been inspired by some incredible El Fuerte performances by a Japanese friend of mine.

> *"...we're planning some things that will take fan input to levels never seen before in the industry."*

In Tatsunoko vs. Capcom, my favorite is probably Chun-Li. That might be a little obvious, but she's just such a flexible and creative character that I can't quit playing her.

How has the gaming industry changed since you became involved with it professionally?
I think it's become much more dynamic. The games biz was always a fast-paced industry, but the pace of change has been accelerating lately with so many opportunities in terms of online as well as new technology.

What aspect of working on a video game do you enjoy the most?
For me, it's having that first vision of what the game should be, helping to realize that by fine-tuning and balancing, and then putting it in front of fans for the first time. To see their honest reactions to what you've been working on is scary and wonderful at the same time, kind of like jumping off a cliff (although I've done that too, and it was actually less scary).

What game creators do you admire or respect, and why?
I have a lot of respect for people pushing in new directions, and I'm really impressed with the vision and bravery of all the indie studios finding success with big publishers like Nintendo. I feel they set an inspiring example that anyone coming up can see and say, "Hey, I could do that!" That said, my heart is always with game mechanics, so my heroes are the designers who nail the little things. For instance, the jump in Super Mario Bros. was just *so* perfect. It's like a pop song from The Beach Boys.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you admire and enjoy?
I read almost compulsively and collect vinyl records (current total is about 5,000 LPs, or half my living space, and books are the other half). I love movies too, but don't collect them. My favorite director is probably Ozu, but I think TV has told better stories than movies for the past few years, which is an interesting trend.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
It used to be Street Fighter, but since I started at Capcom it's too much like work to count as a real getaway. I go to so many crazy events with lots of people that just hiking out to the middle of nowhere is probably my favorite these days—finding a new place to explore.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I always hated ambiguous superpowers that were too open-ended, so I'll just stick to something simple: it would be fun to be basically indestructible—maybe like the Juggernaut? It just seems fun to get knocked straight through a wall or fall off a building and keep on truckin'. You could get into any crazy situation and not have to worry about ending up dead.

GAMEOGRAPHY

MONSTER HUNTER TRI
2010, Wii
COMMUNITY AND WEB RELATIONS

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV
2010, PLAYSTATION 3/XBOX 360
SPECIAL ADVISOR

OKAMIDEN
2011, NINTENDO DS
COMMUNITY AND WEB RELATIONS

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 3D EDITION
TBD, NINTENDO 3DS
SPECIAL ADVISOR

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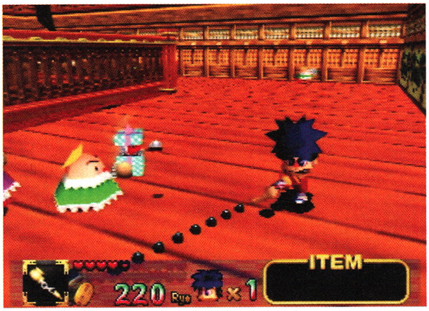
To be honest, I just dyed my hair blue to make my parents mad.

MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON
NINTENDO 64
KONAMI

Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon

A completely accurate re-creation of Japanese history. We swear.

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 64**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **APRIL 1998**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **96, 98, 105, 107, 110, 114, 124**
NUMBER OF SHOW-STOPPING SONGS IN THE GAME: **3**



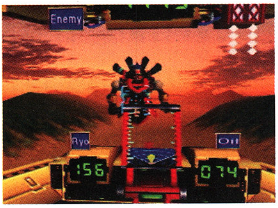
When going into battle, Goemon always remembers the words of Teddy Roosevelt: "Speak softly and carry a big, extending pipe."

Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon begins with our hero and his flamboyant sidekick, Ebisumaru, being chased out of a shop. Ebisumaru, it seems, had stripped down to his loincloth in an attempt to charm a discount out of the shopkeeper with a "hypnotic dance." Immediately after that, a massive, peach-shaped UFO appears over the town. The ship contains a troupe of invaders that hopes to transform Feudal Japan into a giant stage for their elaborate dance productions.

So, yeah, this is a pretty weird game.

Of course, Japanese gamers are quite familiar with the Goemon series's bizarre sense of humor. By the time this game was released, Konami had already brought multiple Goemon titles to the Famicom and Super Famicom (the Japanese NES and Super NES). Unfortunately, most of those titles never reached North America—this was only the second title to make it here. Americans might not have been ready for a game chock-full of corny jokes, surreal non sequiturs, occasional musical numbers (complete with Japanese lyrics and English subtitles), and a laugh track.

One would be forgiven for thinking Mystical Ninja takes its gameplay inspiration from The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, but Mystical Ninja predates Link's first 64-bit adventure by several months. Still, running through the vast 3D world, visiting towns, and exploring dungeons would give anyone visions of Hyrule.



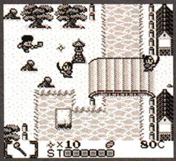
Goemon does add some extras to the formula, though. The dungeons focus more on platforming than puzzles, and there are four playable characters to choose from. Then there are the first-person battles from within a giant robot. You can't forget those.

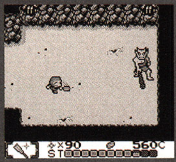
Given its age, Mystical Ninja holds up remarkably well today, but it's not without its share of problems. Outside of towns and dungeons, the landscape is a little too vast. That is to say, Goemon must run across some fairly empty areas to get to where he's going. The camera is also troublesome as the player has no control over its movement. Even so, those minor faults are easy to overlook once you get into the action. The great gameplay and sheer goofiness make this a true N64 classic. **—PHIL T.**

EQUAL IN NAME ONLY

GAME BOY
KONAMI
MYSTICAL NINJA starring GOEMON

When Konami released Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon for the N64, it also released a Game Boy game with the same title. Whereas the N64 game was a blast, the portable version was a mess. It had ugly graphics, sluggish controls, dull levels, and boring goals. It played a bit like the original Legend of Zelda game...if the original Legend of Zelda were awful. Konami would have been better off localizing the first Goemon Game Boy title. Sure, it was six years older than this game, but it was significantly more fun. Sadly, this was the first and only handheld Goemon game released in the US.





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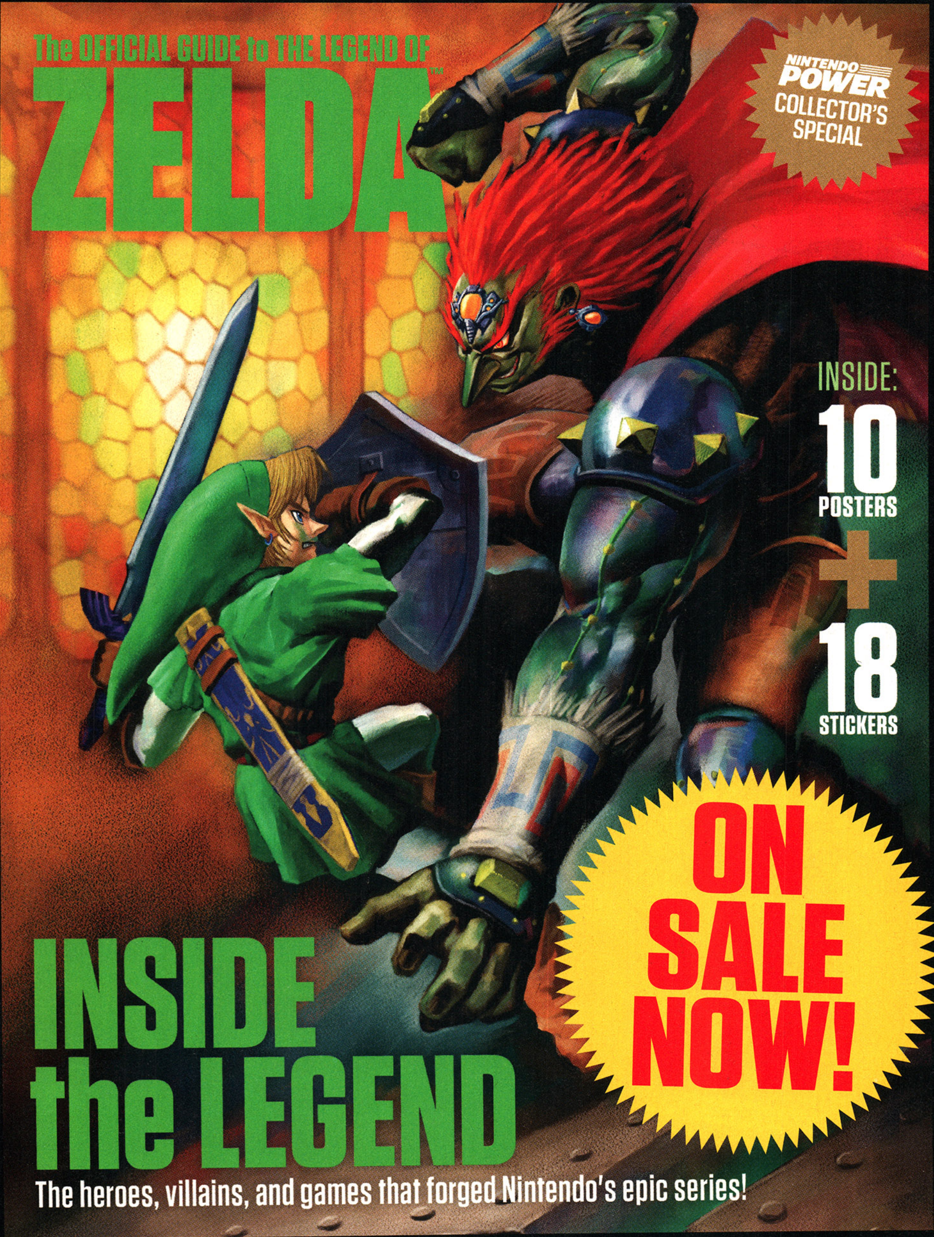
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Has Sega finally delivered the top-notch Sonic adventure we've been waiting for?

True Colors

SONIC COLORS

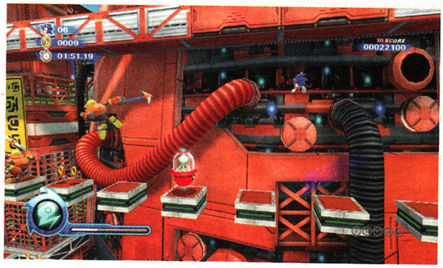
RATING: 9.0

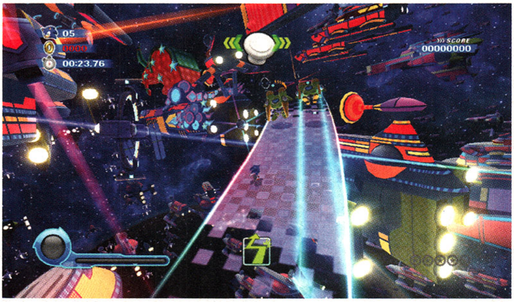
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

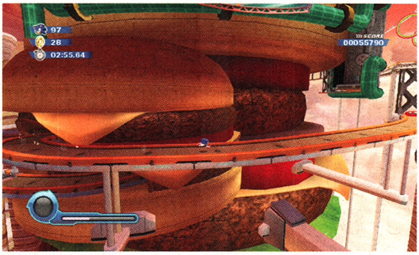
Writing an effusive Sonic review feels a bit like predicting the Detroit Lions to win the Super Bowl—after years of soul-crushing disappointment, fans may find it hard to believe. Yet I'm here to tell you that Sonic Colors is a fantastic game. Not just a step in the right direction, but an unequivocal success. In fact, it's the best entry in the series since the Blue Blur's 16-bit heyday.

So what's led to this remarkable turnaround? First and foremost, Sonic Colors is a true platformer. With 1999's Sonic Adventure, the franchise's developers started emphasizing speed above all else, and over the years, that evolved the series along a much different path than the classic Genesis games, which were about speed *and* platforming. The new approach came with some inherent design issues that Sonic Team struggled to overcome, so the studio seemingly tried to compensate by tacking on additional characters and silly gimmicks. Sonic Colors, on the other hand, feels like a true progeny of the Genesis titles. It's certainly not trying to be the next installment of the older games (see Sonic the Hedgehog 4 for that), but it is a natural progression.

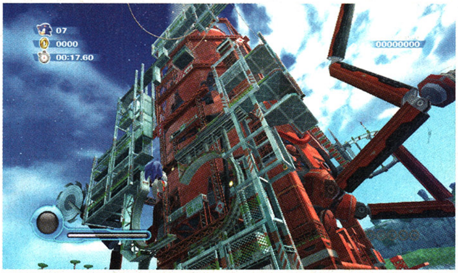
In other words, Sonic Colors isn't afraid to slow things down. The game switches back and forth between a 3D, behind-the-hedgehog perspective and a 2D side-scrolling view. The latter accounts for about 70% of play time, and most of it requires measured, careful platforming rather than always







[Above] As the fast food burger wars continue to heat up, we expect America to look like this in about five years.



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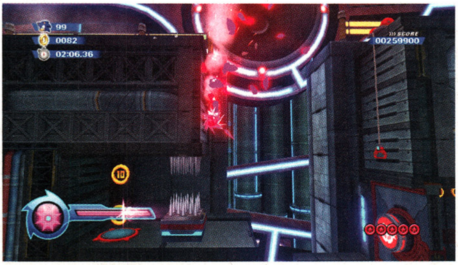
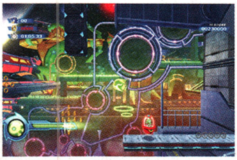
rushing through the environments as quickly as possible. When the action does put the pedal to the metal, it's typically for short bursts that punctuate the experience. That overall balance serves the game's pacing well. Plus, the 3D portions are uncommonly polished for a Sonic title; I never encountered a single camera problem or significant control issue. Perhaps it's a side effect of their relative brevity, but whatever the case, those segments are a lot more fun and a lot less frustrating than Sonic has generally been in 3D. The controls are rock-solid, as well, and you have the option to play with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, the Classic Controller, or a GameCube pad. Motion controls are limited to simply flicking the Wii Remote to activate a power-up.

Colors gets its name from variously hued aliens—called Wisps—that are the source of those power-ups. They're gradually introduced over the course of the adventure, and bestow our fleet-footed hedgehog with a wide variety of temporary abilities. One turns him into a drill, allowing him to burrow through the ground, while another works a lot like the P-Switch in Mario titles, transforming blue coins into blocks and vice versa. (Though less overt, there are numerous other ways the game takes inspiration from Sonic's old rival, which is never a bad thing.) All of the power-ups are pretty entertaining—see the "Rank o' the Wisps" sidebar for a complete rundown—and the developers put them to excellent use. Levels offer tons of opportunities for exploration, with all sorts of nooks and crannies that you can reach only by using certain Wisps. And to encourage that spirit of discovery, five red tokens are scattered throughout each act. Some are cleverly hidden, while others put your proficiency with a given power-up to the test. Collecting the tokens unlocks new bonus stages in the virtual-reality-inspired Eggman's Sonic Simulator, which you can play cooperatively with a friend. Completing those stages, in turn, earns you Chaos Emeralds, and once you gather all seven gems... well, that's a secret. Though I hesitate to mention it, the tokens also unlock one of the most horrifying sights in the history of video games—an alternate character model that places the head of your Mii on Sonic's body. (Fortunately, that aberration is available only in Eggman's Sonic Simulator; I shudder to think of the nightmares that would result from seeing it in the story mode's cut-scenes.)

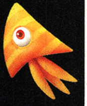
With about 40 stages in story mode alone, Sonic Colors boasts



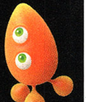


RANK O' THE WISPS

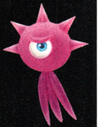
Which alien-fueled power-ups are the coolest? Here's our order of preference.



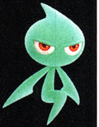
1. Yellow
With the yellow Wisp, Sonic can drill through the ground and speed through water like a torpedo.



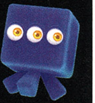
2. Orange
The hedgehog transforms into a rocket when he uses the orange Wisp, blasting high into the air before slowly skydiving back down.



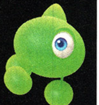
3. Pink
The Pink wisp is reminiscent of Samus's Spider Ball, allowing Sonic to roll along walls and ceilings.



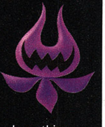
4. Cyan
The cyan Wisp changes the Blue Blur into a laser that can bounce of surfaces and travel quickly between conduits.



5. Blue
When the blue Wisp is activated, Sonic can turn blue coins into blocks and vice versa.



6. Green
While using the green Wisp, Sonic can hover through the air and quickly dash across lines of rings.



7. Purple
The purple Wisp turns our hero into a berserker that can chomp through anything in its path.

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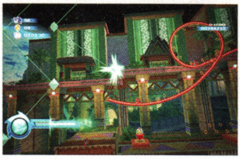
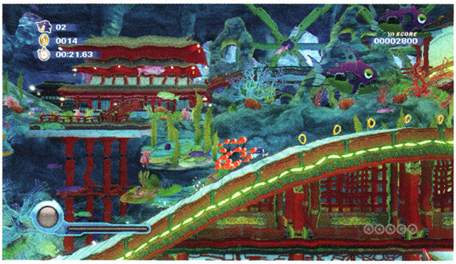
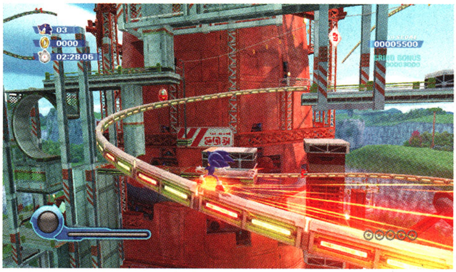
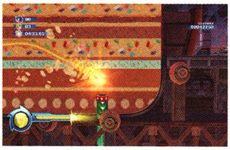


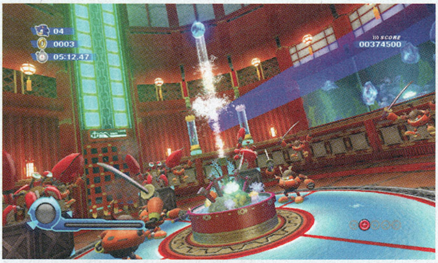
an impressive amount of content, and the power-ups lend it plenty of diversity. A handful of levels even revolve entirely around a particular Wisp, which may set off warning bells given Sonic's history, but these stages are actually fun and manage to provide a nice change of pace without seeming like a radical departure (not unlike the use of power-ups in Super Mario Galaxy). The game also keeps you on your toes by constantly introducing new platforming gimmicks and environmental hazards. Though plenty challenging, it rarely feels unfair—whoever came up with the idea for a flashing hazard signal to warn you of bottomless pits deserves a medal. All told, there are probably 20 hours of gameplay here if you elect to hunt down every token, and I likely would have done so even if they didn't unlock anything. It's a compelling enterprise in and of itself that hardcore platforming fans will appreciate. My one major complaint is that the game recycles boss battles, slapping on a new coat of paint and some slightly altered attack patterns. The encounters are otherwise entertaining, but this shortcut sticks out like a sore thumb given the level of quality everywhere else.

Sometimes quality comes from a show of restraint. After the misguided attempts of most modern Sonic titles to present a grandiose narrative, Sonic Colors wisely keeps the storytelling to a minimum. In fact, things immediately kick off with gameplay rather than some lengthy cut-scene. And what is here in terms of plot is suitably goofy and lighthearted. The basic premise is that Dr. Eggman has gathered a bunch of planets together using a ginormous tractor beam and turned them into an interstellar amusement park. Claiming to have turned over a new leaf, Sonic's archnemesis presents the park as a gift to humanity;









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atonement for his past transgressions. Spoiler alert: he's lying. What follows is similar in tone to a Saturday-morning cartoon, which seems the way to go for a game starring an anthropomorphic hedgehog. Some older players (like NP curmudgeon Chris Hoffman) may find the humor a bit groan-inducing at times, but all in all it's pretty harmless.

It's hard to imagine anyone complaining about the game's looks. The size and scope of its environments are absolutely awe-inspiring, and the backgrounds come alive with lots of colorful detail and a convincing sense of depth. On more than a few occasions you'll question how such spectacle is possible on the Wii hardware, especially when you factor in the consistently smooth frame rate. Better still, the art direction harks back to the fantastical approach of the Genesis games, with worlds that have you running around giant cheeseburgers and navigating a neon-lit spaceship carnival. Longtime fans will also be pleased to see many of Eggman's classic badniks return.

Equally deserving of praise is Jun Senoue's soundtrack. It's one of the veteran composer's best works; a wonderfully eclectic mix that ranges from his trademark guitar riffs to jazzy horn pieces and sweeping classical scores. The one fly in the ointment is the opening theme, but that's largely the fault of some dubious singing. Conversely, Eggman's vocal contributions are pretty entertaining. As you play through the levels, he'll routinely use the park's PA system to make such announcements as, "Would Sonic the Hedgehog please report to the security office? We found your—er...your keys! That's it...we've found your keys."

With the platforming genre in the middle of a resurgence, it is sure nice to see Sonic get back into the fray. This is the game that Sega's fleet-footed mascot has deserved for years, and I would definitely love to see a second installment. The Detroit Lions probably shouldn't book their Super Bowl flights, but hopefully you're convinced that Sonic Colors is worth your while. **—STEVE T.**

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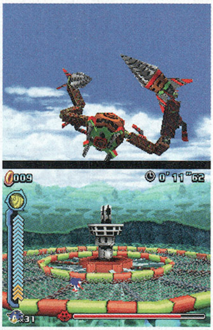

What a Rush

SONIC COLORS

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **DIMPS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Although the Sonic series has struggled in adapting to the current generation of home consoles, fans have never had a hard time finding quality Sonic action on the DS. That's all thanks to the Sonic Rush series, which has stayed faithful to the 2D, dot-pixel graphics of the franchise's classic Genesis releases while playing up its trademark high-speed gameplay. The DS version of Sonic Colors may not be an official Sonic Rush release, but it's by the same development team and it looks and feels very similar to Sonic Rush and Sonic Rush Adventure.

Like the Rush games, Sonic Colors offers a series of cleverly designed 2D stages that span both screens of the Nintendo DS, plus 3D polygonal environments that are used only for boss fights and special stylus-driven bonus stages. The twist is the addition of Wisps, friendly creatures that act as single-use power-ups. Each has been cleverly designed to offer a powerful effect—burrowing through earth, rocket-blasting into the sky, or ricocheting around walls—without slowing the game's frenetic pace. The Wisps are a truly interesting addition to the Sonic formula, a rarity in a series that has often stumbled in its attempts at innovation.

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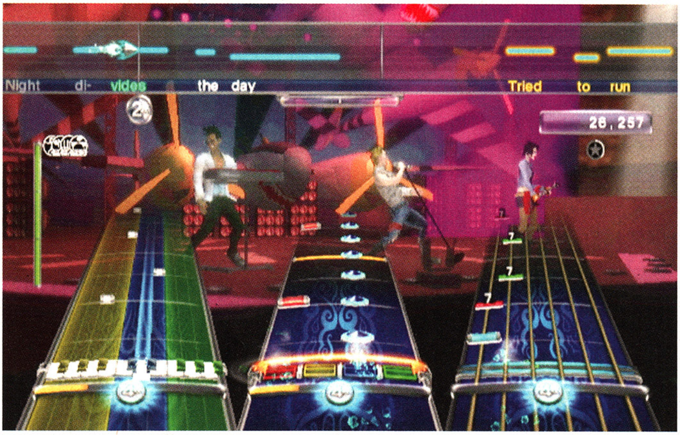
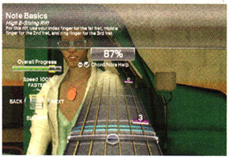
Sonic Colors may be a little too fast-paced for its own good; players can easily blast through its handful of worlds in three or four hours. There are plenty of incentives to keep playing, such as the hidden tokens in each level that can be found by taking alternate routes, and optional missions that reward players for accomplishing specific objectives (such as defeating a certain number of enemies). But without a framing device (like the one in Sonic Rush Adventure) that makes you earn access to future levels, Sonic Colors offers sharply diminishing returns after the first day or two of play. At least you'll enjoy the heck out of it while it lasts. **—CASEY L.**





The Band's Back Together

ROCK BAND 3

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MTV GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **HARMONIX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

I've always considered Rock Band and its plastic instruments a way of getting as close to a piece of music as possible without actually picking up a real guitar and spending many arduous months learning how to play. Harmonix's latest Rock Band iteration not only streamlines its already-engrossing rhythm game, but also provides a bridge between music enthusiast and music performer. And it allows the determined gamer to take that final step into playing a real guitar, keyboard, or set of drums.

The basic gameplay of Rock Band 3 remains the same—for guitar, keyboard, and drums, play your instrument in time with the way the notes scroll down the screen. For vocals, sing to the right tone while the lyrics scroll by. With its gameplay already solid and refined, it's the little enhancements that make the most difference—changes that help iron out small inconveniences and hiccups from this game's predecessors. For starters, players can now jump in or out of a game midsong with any instrument and change difficulty on the fly, and—among the most appreciated changes—all of Rock Band's 83 songs are available at the start of the game.

The career mode plays out as usual: you're an up-and-coming cover band. You start your journey with small gigs at local dive bars, perform well, gain fans, and quickly work your way to world tours and musical stardom. Playing through the career mode consists of many Road Challenges in diverse locations. As you progress through a challenge and go to different gigs, you will be presented with an opportunity to gain spades that contribute to your overall performance score for that challenge. How you earn spades varies from maintaining a long note streak to having Star Power engaged for a specific amount of time. It adds just the right amount of extra activity when you're focused on performing a song well.

RB3's most noteworthy additions are the new 25-key keyboard and 102-button Pro Guitar. Accompanying these new peripherals is a new way to play: a 1:1 transcription of playing the song on a real keyboard, guitar, or drum kit (the Pro Drums now include cymbals as a separate input). Harmonix has developed an advanced tablature to allow you to play the same chords and do the same pick-work you would with a real guitar. Each instrument's Pro mode offers is its own set of difficulty levels, and a huge, comprehensive set of guitar lessons and practice suites for learning how to play each of the songs in RB3.

Can this game teach you how to play *basic* guitar (or keyboards or drums)? Yes. Is it any easier than picking up a real guitar and learning from an instructor? Probably not. Though, if you're setting out to teach yourself guitar, RB3 could be a great motivator. It requires just as much diligence, repetition, and dedication as learning guitar any other way, but when you've had enough of the Pro tutorials for one day, you can always back out and play the songs that inspired you to start learning.

It's hard to imagine where Harmonix can go next with the franchise. However, with hundreds of new challenges and goals to pursue, dozens of hours to spend mastering the new Pro peripherals, and the hundreds (nearing thousands) of downloadable songs already available from previous Rock Band iterations, it's safe to say RB3 will keep us jamming, jumping, and singing for a very long time. **—DAVID M.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT WOULD YOUR CHARACTER BE LIKE IF YOU BECAME A MEMBER OF THE DK CREW?

JUSTIN CHENG

Justice Kong would be an upholder of the law and a keeper of the peace. Imagine a simian version of Judge Dredd, and you get the basic idea.

CAROLYN GUDMUNDSON

My character would be a cross between Dixie Kong and Cranky Kong. Dranky Kong? I would give players unsolicited advice about the nutritional content of bananas and share ponytail styling tips.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Hoffy Kong would help out DK by turning his bananas into tasty banana cream pies. Sometimes I'd hide a surprise inside like a 1-up...or a bomb.

CASEY LOE

I will be Charlton Heston Kong, because I am not down with these damn dirty apes!

RANDY NELSON

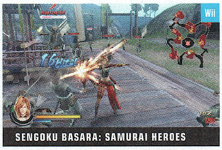
I'd be Solid Kong and have a love for bandanas (and bananas). My best friend would be Otakong.

CHRIS SLATE

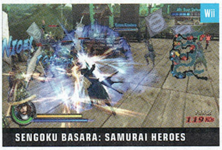
I'd be Party Kong, who would be twice as funky as Funky Kong. Yeah, you don't like it when I steal your thunder, do you, Funky Kong? Like how you set all those Mario Kart Wii world records that I'll never be able to beat? Stay in your own monkey games, you stupid ape!

STEVE THOMASON

You may call me Mega Kong. I would mount a huge banana cannon on my arm and gather an army of Decepti-Kongs to take over the entire jungle. Mwahaha!



SENGOKU BASARA: SAMURAI HEROES



SENGOKU BASARA: SAMURAI HEROES

SENGOKU BASARA: SAMURAI HEROES

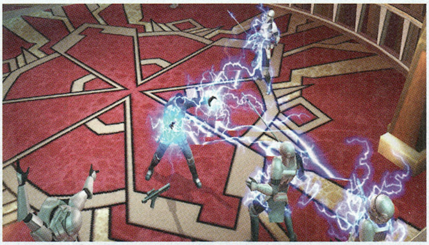
RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Just when I thought I was burnt out on the whole annihilating-thousands-of-foes thing, along comes Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes. A completely over-the-top Samurai Warriors-type game, Capcom's Sengoku Basara feels refreshing despite having essentially the same hack-and-slash gameplay of Koei's long-running franchise. It's the sheer craziness of Sengoku Basara that I find appealing—the game presents a version of Japanese history (it's set during the Warring States period) in which a mecha samurai and a woman wielding an arsenal of anachronistic firearms are the norm.

Unfortunately, the gameplay isn't quite as compelling as the game's overall style. The controls are certainly solid, but there's only so much button-mashing you can do before it grows tiresome, even if you do earn new abilities as you level up. (However, playing cooperatively helps offset some of the monotony.) This is a game best played for short periods of time, not one marathon session.

So, yes, it has its issues, but I still find myself liking Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes. The game's overall zaniness and sense of humor make you want to keep playing just to see what happens next. **—JUSTIN C.**



Stronger in the Force

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

RATING: 8.0

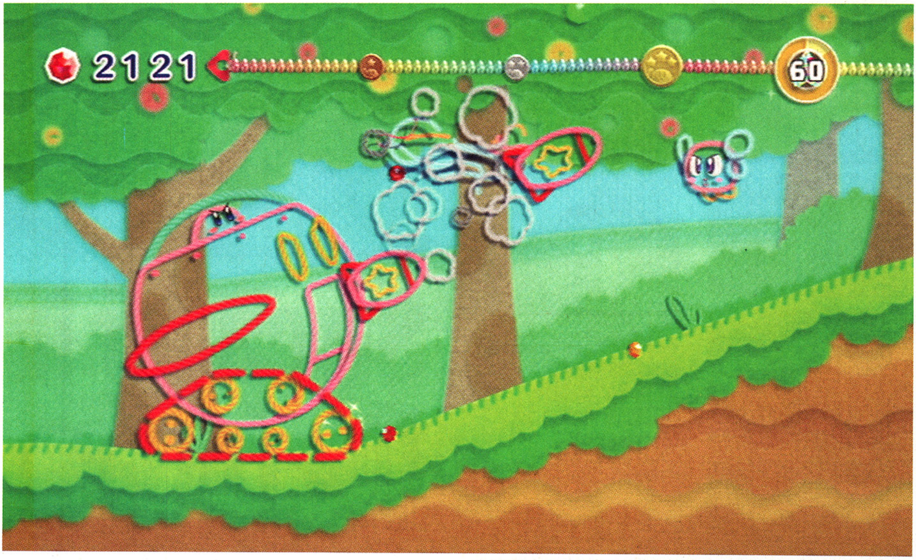
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **RED FLY STUDIO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The original Star Wars: The Force Unleashed was promising, but it underdelivered a bit. Oh, it was awesome to utilize an arsenal of Force powers on an army of Imperials at first, but it got stale after a while. And swinging the Wii Remote controller like a lightsaber is good in theory, but leads to arm fatigue in practice. Fortunately, developer Red Fly Studio (Ghostbusters: The Video Game) has addressed those issues for Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II by presenting you a wider variety of enemies to face (although it still becomes repetitive), allowing you to simply tap a button to swing your lightsaber, and giving you some all-new Force abilities (Force Sight, Force Fury) that make you feel like an even-more-badass Jedi.

This time around, Starkiller (or rather, his clone) is out to rescue members of his old crew—curmudgeonly Jedi Master Rahm Kota and pilot/love interest Juno Eclipse—and take down Darth Vader and his underlings. The story is not as grand in scope as it is in the first game (that one ended with—spoiler alert—the birth of the Rebel Alliance, after all), but it does enough to push you toward the next challenge. Plus, there are some pretty epic moments sprinkled throughout the title. A lot of these moments appear after motion-controlled quick-time events, which are easier to pull off than in the first The Force Unleashed (although sometimes the game seemed to not recognize my gestures).

In addition to the solid single-player adventure, The Force Unleashed II has a Super Smash Bros.-inspired multiplayer component that's good fun. Sure, it could use a larger roster of characters, but considering that the multiplayer isn't even the game's main mode, it's definitely a welcome inclusion.

—JUSTIN C.



Epic Win

KIRBY'S EPIC YARN

RATING: 8.5

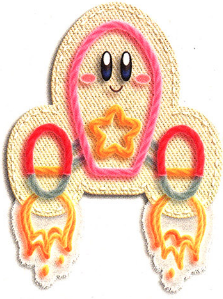
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GOOD-FEEL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Kirby's Epic Yarn is, quite simply, fantastic. Most of the Kirby titles are thoroughly enjoyable, but this one stands apart from its predecessors thanks largely to the novel textile aesthetics that make the game look like art in motion. This is one of the most uniquely styled titles around for the Wii console.

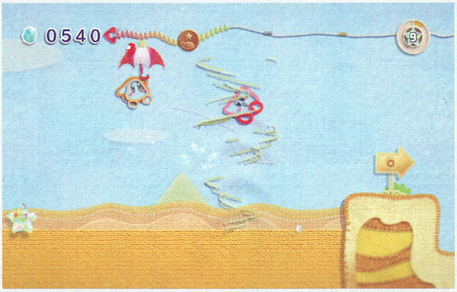
From a story perspective, there's a reason why everything in the game looks all arts-and-craftsy. An evil sorcerer named Yin-Yarn has entered Kirby's homeworld of Dream Land, transforming its citizens into yarnified versions of themselves. Kirby doesn't know this, however. He happens across an appetizing tomatolike fruit that turns out to be attached to Yin-Yarn's head. In retaliation for eating the megamato, Yin-Yarn transports Kirby to Patch Land, a world that Yin-Yarn has broken up into seven pieces. It's up to Kirby—and his ally (and co-op partner; more on this later) Prince Fluff—to find the pieces of magical yarn that can stitch the world back together.

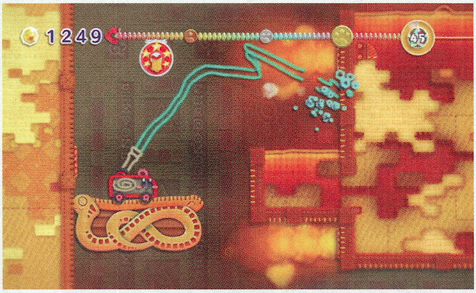
To accompany this different approach to the visuals is a different approach to the gameplay. No longer can Kirby steal enemies' powers—instead, the pink puffball can contort and transform his body to accomplish his goals. He can lasso enemies, drive left or right as a car, dive into the water as a submarine, crush things as a weight, or float to the ground as a parachute. None of these transformations are difficult to grasp (the NES-style controls are easy to learn, and numerous tutorials are peppered throughout), nor is the game as a whole. If you want to do just enough to get through the game, you can do so without too much trouble. And it certainly helps that Kirby can't die; he loses beads—the game's form of currency—when he gets hit.

While this lower difficulty level and the colorful graphics may make Kirby's Epic Yarn seem like an adventure for a very young audience, hardcore

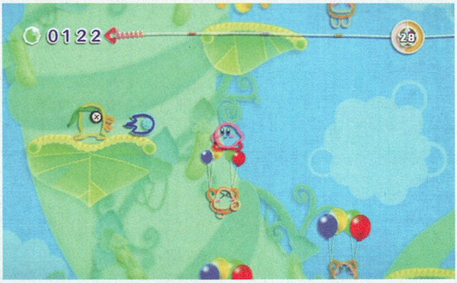


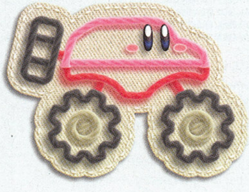
Yes, Kirby goes into space. We'll keep what he does there a surprise.





[Above] Kirby may lose beads if he's not careful, but he can't die. [Below] Just because Kirby is made of yarn doesn't mean he isn't heavy.



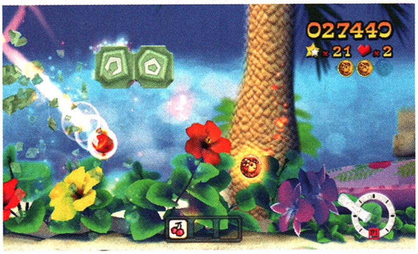


gamers would be remiss in writing it off. To get the most enjoyment out of this game, you need some platforming skills (as would be expected from a game crafted by Wario Land: Shake It! developer Good-Feel). There are three collectibles to find in each stage (two pieces of furniture that are used to deck out the apartments of Kirby and his neighbors, and a song from the game's orchestral soundtrack), as well as plentiful beads to acquire. (You want to gather enough beads to earn a gold medal for the stage, right?) Reaching these curios often means taking risks. Sure, Kirby technically can't die when you miss a jump and fall into a bottomless pit, but it's heartbreaking to watch as a large percentage of Kirby's beads fall into oblivion as the angelic Angie carries him back to a safe platform. Being transported to safety also means you have to keep trying to get past where you made your error.

What kept me coming back for more, though, was not the knickknacks or the story (which, despite the game's title, isn't all that epic). No, it was because of the game's pleasant surprises. The various worlds—which have names such as Grass Land, Hot Land, Treat Land, and Water Land, giving you an obvious indication of each world's theme—feature a variety of great sections, but it's Kirby's super-transformations that are especially cool. From a tank to a fire engine to a flying saucer, Kirby can take many forms at specific locations. And just when you think you've seen all the super-transformations the game has to offer, a new one will pop up. More than simply adding visual variety, these super-transformations radically alter the gameplay, changing the genre for a brief time from a platformer to, say, a shooter.

As awesome as the super-transformations are during the single-player experience, they are even better when you're playing cooperatively. To control the giant Kirby tank in co-op play, for example, one player drives while the other shoots. Not all of the super-transformations have that amount of cooperation, though; you and your buddy play as two separate vehicles for many of them. Regardless, playing with a friend—both in and out of super-transformations—is great. The only issues I had with the co-op were that the game pools beads (so we lost some when either my pal or I got hit) and that I ended up lassoing my buddy (accidentally or on purpose) instead of the enemies or objects I should have been grabbing.

Granted, Kirby's Epic Yarn is not the most challenging adventure around, but this title is polished, offers great platforming, and looks amazing. Most importantly, Kirby's Epic Yarn is good fun. So while it may not be exactly *epic*, this game is fantastic. **—JUSTIN C.**



NBA 2K11

ATARI'S GREATEST HITS VOL. 1

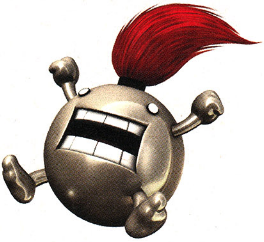
Fashion it!
DS
CRAFTING MAMA

Emoticon Hero

FLINGSMASH

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ARTOON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**



As the title *FlingSmash* implies, this is one arm-tiring adventure. The hero, a grinning yellow emoticon-esque ball full of block-smashing glory known as Zip, has been called upon by the island people of Suthon to save the day after an evil half-masked wizard parks his giant fortress above the island, allowing himself to leech the power of the island's Great Palm Tree. Using the Wii Remote controller equipped with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, you guide Zip in the direction of your every flick to smash him through blocks and bad guys in a series of challenge packed side-scrolling levels.

FlingSmash doesn't bring anything new to the table in terms of Wii MotionPlus capability, but the gameplay serves up thrilling think-on-your-feet moments that will determine which route Zip will take and how many points he'll accumulate. And although the constant (and sometimes strenuous) swatting with the Wii Remote absolutely becomes repetitive, new and clever challenges that result from the evil wizard's curses as well as creative and unpredictable level designs should keep players interested. The "just one more level" mentality unquestionably develops after you've played a few stages and tried out a few power-ups. To sweeten the pot, there's drop-in multiplayer, allowing you to have a two player destruction derby whenever you please. FlingSmash may not be groundbreaking, but its addictive simplicity in combination with its challengingly creative level designs may have you ignoring the in-game suggestions that you take a break and stop flinging so violently. **—CODY M.**

NBA 2K11

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Michael Jordan's presence in NBA 2K11 is profound. He's much more than just the guy on the cover. In fact, the game serves as a virtual history lesson on the legendary player, letting you do everything from replay key games in his career to unlocking more Air Jordan shoe styles than you knew existed. For Jordan fans, there's nothing else like it. This doesn't net NBA 2K11 an automatic win, though; the game has some frustrating controls that feel too complex and imprecise when using the Wii Remote, and the user interface is extremely unintuitive. With a Classic Controller and a lot of practice, there's a decent game of b-ball to be had—just be prepared to work for it. **—DEAN R.**

ATARI'S GREATEST HITS VOL. 1

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **ATARI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

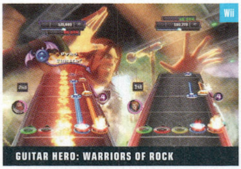
There's reverence for some of Atari's early games—Pong, Missile Command, and Centipede, to name a few—but after a certain point, we have to come to grips with the fact that there are simply much better games than a majority of the 50 Atari arcade and home-console titles crammed onto this DS card. The novelty of having the true arcade classics to take anywhere—along with some previously unreleased games, like the Atari 2600 version of Tempest—is nice, but is it worth the asking price? Only for the most devoted retro gamers and collectors, really. There's just way too much (poorly documented) filler—rather than the greatest hits, this mostly feels like material found in the bargain bin. **—RANDY N.**

CRAFTING MAMA

RATING: 7.0

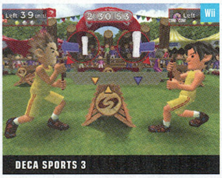
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COOKING MAMA LTD.**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Her English may not be so great, but Mama is definitely a woman of many talents. Taking a break from cooking and gardening, Crafting Mama sees the handkerchief-wearing matron trying her hand at the arts-and-crafts scene. This effervescent minigame collection has you making everything from jewelry and pinwheels to scented candles and origami. Crafting projects are wide-ranging, and the step-by-step minigames are a pleasant change of pace from food prep. However, the touch-screen controls aren't always as forgiving or precise as they should be—a problem throughout the series. With a ton of crafts to unlock, Crafting Mama offers a reasonably good time, but the appeal of sewing pink aprons and pressing fragrant flowers is pretty limited. **—NATHAN M.**


GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

NAMCO MUSEUM MEGAMIX

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK


DECA SPORTS 3

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **VICARIOUS VISONS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

At a time when rhythm games are oversaturating the market, it's great to see the Guitar Hero franchise trying something different—a focused story with individualized characters—to stand out. It's not an entirely successful venture, as the story isn't all that compelling, but using each rocker's unique abilities to accrue more stars makes you feel powerful. (It's a great feeling to earn stars in the double digits when you've been used to earning smaller numbers of them in the previous Guitar Hero games.) For this title the developers wanted a more shredding-guitar-style soundtrack, but don't worry if, like me, you're not a huge fan of many of the 93 songs on the disc; thankfully, Warriors of Rock is compatible with tracks you've downloaded previously. **—JUSTIN C.**

NAMCO MUSEUM MEGAMIX

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

If you already own a copy of 2007's Namco Museum Remix for Wii, there's very little reason to pick up Megamix. It contains a nearly identical set of "remixed" classics—Galaga, Rally-X, Pac 'n Roll, Gator Panic, and Motos—adding only the tank shooter Grobda Remix. In the way of nonremixed games, Megamix features twice as many as Remix's nine, but these include the original versions of the aforementioned remixed titles—which the original compilation strangely lacked. So, what's new? A few forgotten games (see Dig Dug II) and ones you likely own in some other collection. Namco Bandai's asking price for Megamix is only $20, thankfully, but anyone who already has Namco Museum Remix should steer clear. **—RANDY N.**

DECA SPORTS 3

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The Deca Sports games have been somewhat of a budget-friendly complement to Nintendo's Wii Sports line. Though both series feature a bevy of motion-centric minigames, there's a clear separation when it comes to quality. Deca Sports 3 includes 10 new events ranging from diving to logging, but the execution feels both overly simplistic and loose. Even for the younger crowd there's not much here to recommend, unless your child is dying for some kayaking or lacrosse action. The inclusion of support for the Wii MotionPlus accessory, extra event challenges, and limited online play shows there was some effort put into the game—but we'd rather have seen more development time spent on the fundamentals. **—DEAN R.**

Cute Overload

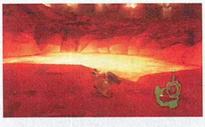
POKÉPARK Wii: PIKACHU'S ADVENTURE

RATING: 7.5

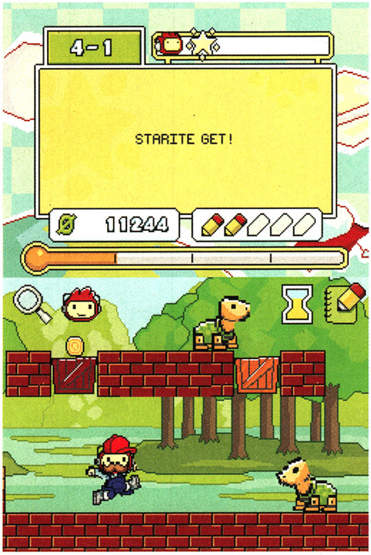
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CREATURES INC.**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure is, in a word, adorable. Not only is it easily the best-looking Pokémon game to date, but it's a celebration of everything Pokémon, bursting with fan service that anyone who's familiar with the series will appreciate. If you weren't convinced that Pikachu is the cutest video game character ever created, you will be after experiencing this.

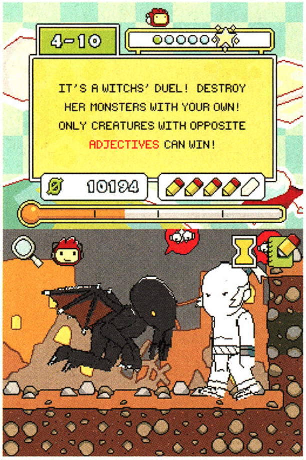
You play as Pikachu, and as you put the fractured park back together by collecting Sky Prism Pieces and mending relationships between the Pokémon who run the park, you get to see Pokémon interacting in new and different ways, since they freely talk to Pikachu about all kinds of things. The simplistic story is surprisingly interesting because of the personalities of each of the Pokémon—talking to a lovably arrogant Gyarados is as cool as you would imagine.



The park's collection of minigames isn't anything too special, however, and although there are a few winners in the bunch—going for the high score in the Arkanoid-like Bastiodon's Block Barrage is superaddictive, for instance—the various motion-controlled racing games feel uninspired. The mostly lackluster minigames hardly matter though, since exploring each of the park's areas is so engrossing. As you travel through the nine zones (Beach Zone, Iceburg Zone, Haunted Zone, etc.), you find Pokémon to befriend by playing Skill Games such as Battle and Chase with them or by doing side quests. Meeting friends and filling out your PokéPark Pad is undeniably compelling, and it's impossible not to want to befriend every Pokémon. So although some of the Attractions miss their mark, there are so many other things to see and do that any Pokémon fan will enjoy a visit to the PokéPark. **—CAROLYN G.**

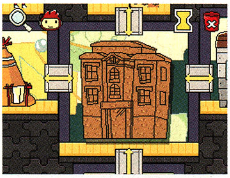


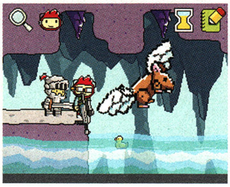
STARITE GET!



IT'S A WITCHS' DUEL! DESTROY HER MONSTERS WITH YOUR OWN! ONLY CREATURES WITH OPPOSITE ADJECTIVES CAN WIN!

Super Scribblenauts is full of imaginative levels. [Above] In this stage, you must conjure creatures to battle each other in a fight to the finish. [Left] This stage seems vaguely familiar....





New, Improved, Enhanced Innovation

SUPER SCRIBBLENAUTS

RATING: 8.5

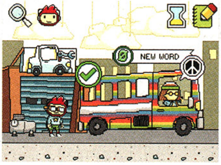
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

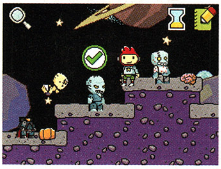
When it was released last year, the original Scribblenauts was the very incarnation of innovation and originality in video games. Boasting the unprecedented ability to let users create virtually any object by simply writing it, Scribblenauts was unlike anything that anyone had ever played—an open-ended, free-form action-puzzle game in which players were limited by little more than their imaginations. The title wasn't without faults, but I (and apparently about a million others) didn't mind putting up with them for the opportunity to enjoy such a groundbreaking gameplay experience. Now that the sequel, Super Scribblenauts, has arrived, you'll get even more creative freedom, and this time you won't have to endure nearly as many headaches in the name of innovative gaming.

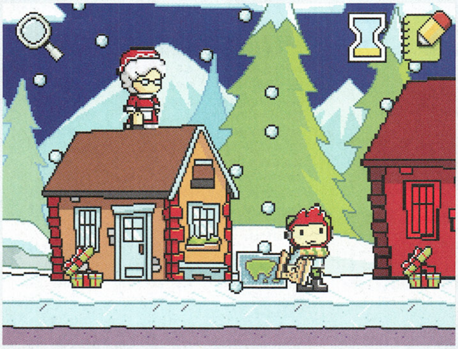
As developer 5th Cell promised, Super Scribblenauts features improvements across the board. If you weren't fond of controlling protagonist Maxwell with the stylus in the previous game, you can opt for a new direct-control method that allows you to move the character with the Control Pad and jump using the buttons. Of course, you still have to use the touch screen a lot for creating, placing, and interacting with objects, so I usually found it more convenient to rely on stylus-based character movement. But that, too, has been thoroughly improved. The touch-screen movement is now much more reliable; Max no longer runs off when you don't want him to, and he moves only when you're touching the screen in his vicinity. In fact, the only time I had any problem with Max's movement was when I tried to click on a very small object near Max and I tapped the background by mistake.

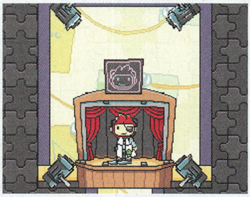
Likewise, the occasionally wonky physics from the original Scribblenauts have been fixed. Remember how you'd sometimes kick a bridge into a pit when you were trying to walk over it, or you'd jump onto a floating object only to have it fly offscreen and kill Max and/or nearby NPCs? Those days are over. Everything in Super Scribblenauts feels more substantial and reacts like it should.

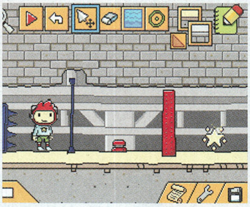
The camera problems from the first game have been addressed, as well. Although the solution is nothing more than the removal of the automatically recentering camera that snapped back to Maxwell's position after a few seconds (there's a button to recenter on Max instead), that simple deletion does a world of good—especially since you spend a lot more time interacting with things other than Max this time out. Speaking of which, the ability to unequip NPCs by clicking on them is another excellent, if subtle, improvement that minimizes problems.







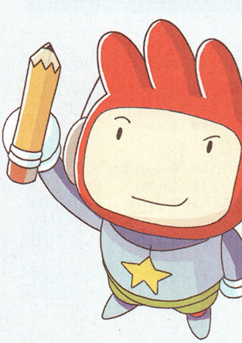




Of course, all the improvements in the world wouldn't mean squat if the core gameplay had grown stale, but that's certainly not the case here. Now that you can write adjectives as well as nouns, the creative possibilities are exponentially greater. Why make a cow when you can make a bovine ninja, or a fire when you can make ultimate burning pants? As in the original Scribblenauts, you can spend hours upon hours coming up with ludicrous scenarios and watching the emergent gameplay unfold. However, the adjectives aren't just for laughs; they're actually integrated very well into the stages. There are several levels in which you must use adjectives, such as when you're asked to come up with a combination of two unlike things. (A cross between a giant and a dwarf, for example, could be a "huge dwarf.")

In fact, the level design overall is far more interesting than that of the previous Scribblenauts. There's loads of variety, from creating objects that have certain properties (what's white and aquatic?) to giving characters items they desire to dressing Maxwell in certain types of outfits to combining parts into a new object with the Create-a-tron. But not all stages are as simple as conjuring the right items. Some stages feature multipart objectives and a bit of a narrative, such as completing a fireman's training course or solving a Professor Layton-esque logic puzzle before you can give Christmas gifts to a group of youngsters. There's even a stage in which you reenact a scene from Super Mario Bros.

Almost every level, however, has a puzzle focus—definitely a good thing, since the puzzle levels were easily the strongest part of the original Scribblenauts. Two of the twelve worlds are action-oriented bonus zones in which you must simply overcome obstacles to reach the Starite to win, but even they require more thought than just creating a strong weapon and a jetpack on your way to the goal. On the other hand, if you want to just blast everything in your path, you can craft such stages (or several types of puzzle stages) in the game's vastly improved level editor, which offers far more freedom than before (albeit with more of a learning curve).



But Super Scribblenauts isn't perfect. Though the frustration is kept to a minimum, you will encounter a few "What the heck?!" moments, such as when you suddenly fail a level for creating an object that doesn't fall within certain parameters, or when you're told to not hurt any characters, yet you lose when you merely make one of them doze off. Additionally, it would be nice to have checkpoints on some of the longer levels so you don't have to replay everything if you fail at the end. (The game does, at least, explain why you lost for performing a certain action, and provide feedback so you know you're on the right path.)

The biggest knock against the game, though, is that it simply isn't as groundbreaking as its predecessor. Sure, it's better in almost every regard (the exceptions being graphics and sound, which are nearly identical), but it just doesn't have the same wow factor that the original did; it's for that reason alone that I can't give Super Scribblenauts as high a score as I gave its precursor. Nonetheless, Super Scribblenauts is extremely entertaining and provides nearly limitless fun. Whether you never played the original or are looking for a refined version of an already great game, you'd do well to check out Super Scribblenauts; it's one of the best DS titles to hit this year. —**CHRIS H.**

A Few Small Repairs

When Nintendo Power broke the news of Super Scribblenauts with our Vol. 253 cover story, 5th Cell stated that the game would feature a number of needed improvements over the original. Did the developers follow through?

☑ **Improved Controls**
The enhanced touch-screen controls and new Control Pad controls work like a charm.

☑ **Improved Physics**
Objects you place no longer get haphazardly knocked around.

☑ **Improved Camera**
The auto-snap-back feature has been removed. Yay!

☑ **Improved Level Editor**
Now you can create maps from scratch and make custom puzzle stages.

☑ **Removal of Par System**
The par system discouraged experimentation. Now it's gone.

☑ **More Level Variety**
There are several types of new levels. Multipart stages with both puzzle and action aspects are the best.

☑ **Refined Advanced Mode**
Advanced mode is available on most stages, but not on the ones where it just doesn't make sense.

☑ **Improved Hint System**
Not only do you get new hints as you complete level objectives, but you can buy extra hints if you get stuck.

☑ **Health Bars**
Actually, we didn't talk about this in our cover story, but health bars for every character and object are a useful and appreciated addition.

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Video Game	7.0	Warner Bros.	260	E10+
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
FIFA Soccer 11	8.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Flip's Twisted World	6.0	Majesco	260	E
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros.	257	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	4.5	Warner Bros.	260	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	5.5	Warner Bros.	260	T
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Skyheroes	7.5	Electronic Arts	260	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
NBA Jam	9.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Samurai Warriors 3	6.0	Omega Force	260	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Sid Meier's Pirates!	8.5	2K Games	260	E10+
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	8.0	Activision	260	T
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Swords	5.0	Majesco	260	T

MORE ON:

NBA JAM

As a video game critic, I'm paid to ponder a title's many intricacies; to delve deep into its inner workings to determine what makes it tick. But you know what? NBA Jam is just *fun.* I don't know if I *could* turn my brain on while playing the game, and I mean that as a compliment. Hours fly by as I run up and down the court, repeatedly throwing the same few moves on my buddies here at NP HQ. I've never played a game that stays so engaging despite being incredibly repetitive. —**CHRIS S.**

STOUDEMIRE
HARRINGTON
0:06
JAMES
WADE
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MORE ON:

SIN AND PUNISHMENT: STAR SUCCESSOR

With Star Successor, the fine folks at Treasure once again live up to their reputation as leading purveyors of quality action gaming. Their latest offering hasn't received as much attention as it deserves, but if you have even a passing interest in blowing stuff up, it is absolutely required playing. —**STEVE T.**

BOSS
SCORE 4.408.666
MULTIPLIER
x0.8
ISA
Destroyed
387

Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
Wii Party	7.5	ND Cube	260	RP
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

MONOPOLY STREETS

Of the board games I played when I was younger, Monopoly is easily one of my top-five favorites, so I'm glad that Monopoly Streets doesn't really mess with the fundamentals. The graphics are charming, and despite having fond memories of long Monopoly sessions, I appreciate that the developers have sped up the game's pace. —JUSTIN C.

Nintendo DS

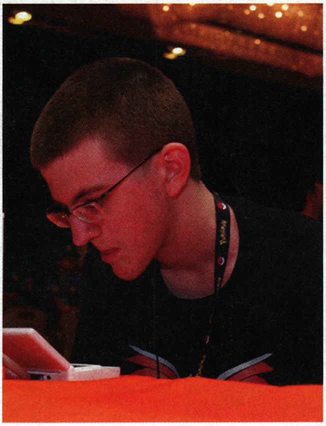
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game—Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	8.5	Altus	260	E10+
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	8.0	Square Enix	260	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	6.0	Natsume	258	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	7.0	Aksys	247	T
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.0	XSEED	259	E
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	9.0	Square Enix	247	E10+
The Last Airbender	7.5	THQ	257	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Lufia : Curse of the Sinistrals	8.0	Natsume	260	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	8.0	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	8.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	6.0	Eidos	247	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	7.0	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Phantasy Star Ø	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	7.0	Nintendo	260	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	9.0	Level-5	260	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	7.5	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	6.0	Aksys	258	T
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	9.0	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	7.0	Activision	260	E10+
Spore Hero Arena	5.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: War for Cybertron	7.0	Activision	258	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	4.0	NIS America	247	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T

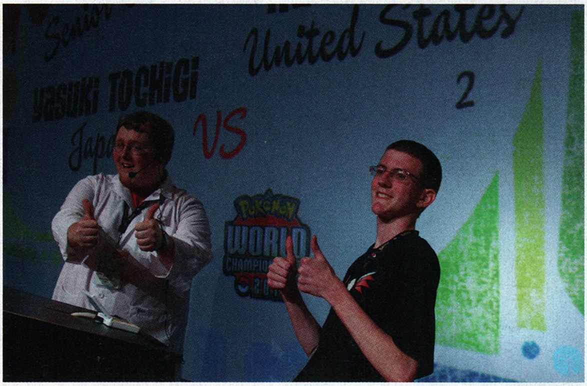
MORE ON:

BATMAN: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD: THE VIDEOGAME (DS)

The Wii version of Batman: The Brave and the Bold is good, but the DS edition is arguably even better. Not only does it feature deeper play mechanics, the ability to swap between characters at almost any time, and a greater emphasis on platforming, but it's also more challenging (and thus more satisfying). —CHRIS H.

COMMUNITY





Ray Rizzo made history as the first North American Pokémon Video Game World Champion.

EVENT

A Champion Appears!

Meet Ray Rizzo, senior-division winner of this year's Pokémon World Championships.

THE 2010 Pokémon World Championships were held this August on the beautiful Big Island of Hawaii, and one of the most exciting moments of the tournament was the final seniors' battle, in which Ray Rizzo from New Jersey pulled a victory in the face of almost certain defeat to take the title of Pokémon World Champion. We chatted with him about the keys to his success.
—CAROLYN G.

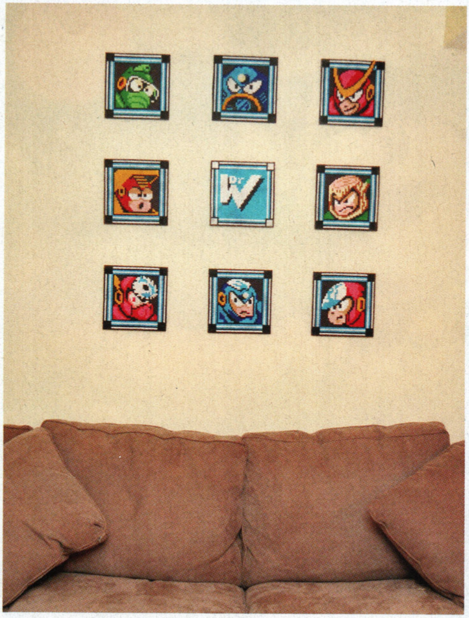
How long have you been playing Pokémon, and how did you get involved in competitive battling?
I have been playing since Pokémon Red and Blue first came out in the US. I didn't get involved in playing competitively until Pokémon Diamond and Pearl came out, which introduced the ability to battle other players over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

What was your process for creating your tournament team?
First I thought of a lot of different ideas in my spare time. Then I tested them all in battle until I found one that won almost every time which I was comfortable using. I actually had it narrowed down to two possible teams I could use, but since I qualified for Worlds in 2008 using a Trick Room strategy, I felt more comfortable using Trick Room in Worlds again.

What is the single most important thing you did to prepare for the tournament?
I would say sleep should be the most important thing you can do to prepare, but I was guilty of not getting enough sleep. For me battling as many people as I could to prepare was the most important. Thinking of good team ideas is not enough. You actually have to see if the team works well in practice like you hope it does in your mind.

You lost once earlier in the tournament to Yasuki Tochigi, a competitor from Japan whom you went on to defeat in the final match. How did you manage a victory the second time despite having to use the same Pokémon?
I had a while to think over new ways I could beat Yasuki since I last played him, and when I thought I came up with the best strategy to beat him I asked my friends what they thought and we decided together that it was the best chance I had at winning.

What advice can you give Pokémon fans who want to get into competitive battling?
My best advice would be to join an online [Pokémon fan] community where you can brainstorm ideas with other competitors from around the world, battle a lot of other players to test those ideas, as well as make friends that you'll have a lot of fun meeting at the various VGC [Video Game Championship] competitions.



FANDOM

Bead Battles

A homemade craft as challenging as the bosses themselves!

THOUGH CIRCULAR in shape, little plastic Perler Beads look remarkably like 8-bit pixels when joined in unison, as evidenced by this sharp re-creation of the boss-select screen from NES classic Mega Man 2.

Designed by 24-year-old Baltimore-area resident Jenn Ganss, this impressive piece of wall art is constructed from around 9,000 of those tiny beads, which were precisely placed with the help of some enlarged screenshots and designs from a cross-stitch-pattern generator. To create these familiar portraits of Quick Man, Heat Man, and the other classic bosses, Ganss glued the beads onto nine separate foam backing boards, which she says gives "a little bit of depth" to each piece.

Ganss tells us she spent about $100 on materials, but the biggest investment was clearly time: the project was originally intended as a Christmas gift for her Mega Man–loving fiancée in 2007, but she just recently finished it. She credits the delay to a scrapped first attempt and frequent moves, but now that the project is complete, she and her beloved are quite pleased with the final product. "There were a few bumps in the road," Ganss reflects, "but in the end it was worth it!" We concur! —**ANDREW H.**

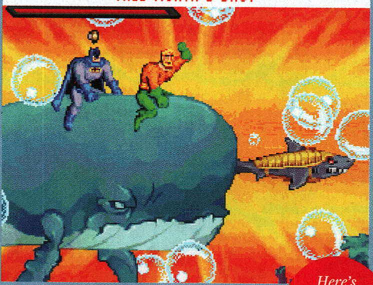
Correction: n V. 259, Doug Fullerton took the two photographs of Princess Zelda cosplayer Michelle Morse in the garden. Arielle Somberg, who did postprocessing for all the pictures, took the photo of Morse in front of the church.

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

SEND CAPTION TO **screentest@nintendopower.com**.

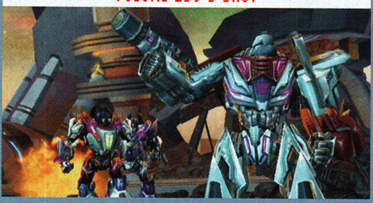
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



The third Batman movie jumped the shark after the director decided to include *Inception*-esque dream sequences in the film.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 259'S SHOT



"Hold it. Nobody move. One of my contacts just fell out." —**SEAN M.**

"No, kids, we *are not* there yet! Hey, Billy, get away from the fire—it's dangerous! Don't make me turn into a car and then turn around!" —**ARJAHN**

"Hey, Starscream, I think my fusion cannon's busted. Would you mind checking down the barrel for me?" —**RGOESSL**

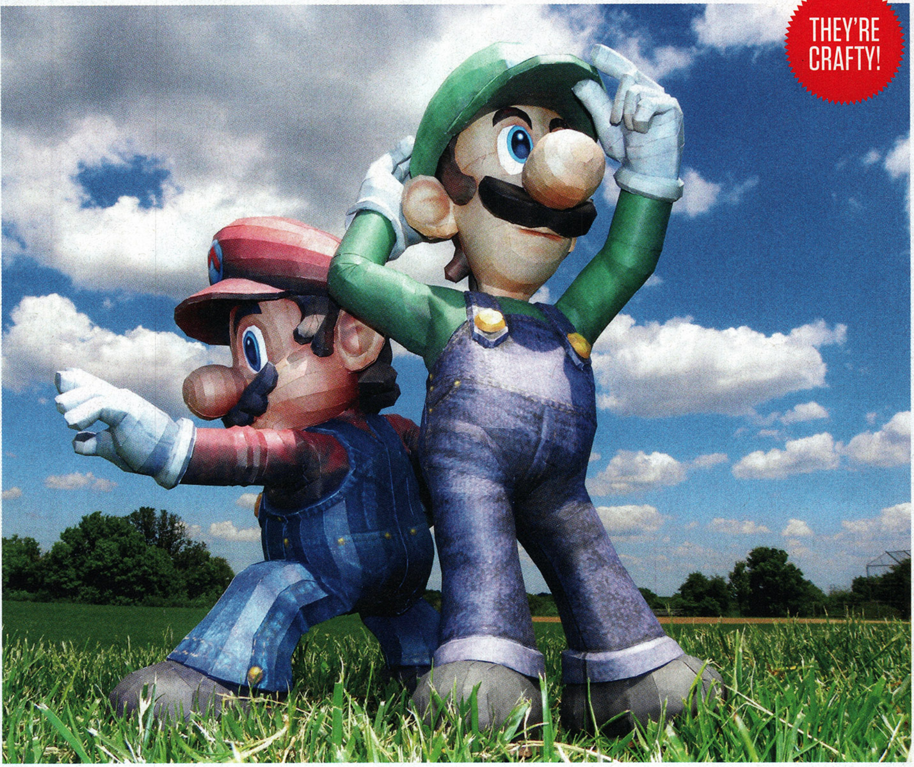
"Do we really need to go through all this work to get a cheeseburger?" —**LINKISGREAT**

"Suddenly, after seven years, Megatron finally realized how small his gun was compared to the rest of his body." —**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

"OK, who's the wise guy that gave me the toy flamethrower?" —**TYLER B.**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!



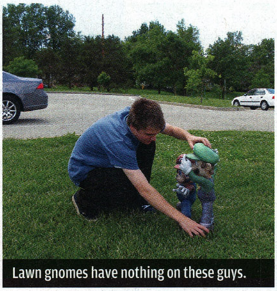
FANDOM

Paper Mario (and Luigi)!

One fan turns $10 of paper and ink into two fantastic statuettes.

MARIO AND LUIGI have no doubt taken their share of punches and kicks in the millions upon millions of Super Smash Bros. Brawl matches played throughout the world, but we have a feeling that these awesome paper-based re-creations wouldn't be quite as resilient in battle.

These two papercraft statuettes—which stand 40cm and 50cm tall, respectively—come to us from Dan Hilse, an 18-year-old student from St. Louis, Missouri who has put together more than 100 such models based on characters from the Mario, Legend of Zelda, and Pokémon franchises.


Lawn gnomes have nothing on these guys.

While the original templates for these Smash Bros. interpretations of the brothers Mario came from user Ignatius of the unofficial Nintendo Papercraft forum community, Hilse says he made several "stylistic changes" to the models during the creation process, which entails a lot of printing and precise gluing. Once the figures were complete, he enlisted the talents of his photographer brother, Bill, to capture the above shot.

"There's no better feeling than looking at a freshly bought pack of paper and considering what those blank sheets will become once brought to life," he explains. Despite the very impressive detail and craftsmanship, Hilse claims his expenses on the project were only about $10, which went toward printer ink and that paper he mentions.

However, the much bigger investment can be time. Hilse says learning how to assemble papercraft models is a trial-and-error process, and that putting together something as complex as this simply requires a lot of man-hours. He spent a couple of months working on the models, putting in hours when he had them, but luckily he managed to multitask: "I was able to watch a lot of movies I never had the time to watch," he notes. **—ANDREW H.**

There are lots of fan films out there, but few are as impressive as this one.

FANDOM

Mega Movie Man

This is Mega Man like you've never seen him before.

EVER SINCE he got his first NES as a kid, Eddie Lebron, 22, of New York, has been hooked on games. Back then he spent all of his free time playing games, but his interests took a dramatic turn in 1998 when he got his hands on a small VHS camcorder. "My world completely changed," he recalls. Twelve years later, Lebron is entering his last year of film school, and he's already directed several independent movies. Despite his focus on film, though, he hasn't left his love of games behind. In fact, one of his most ambitious projects to date is a live-action film based on one of his all-time favorite NES games: Mega Man.

"I'm a huge Mega Man fan," Lebron admits. "I've always had a fascination toward robots and artificial intelligence. Mega Man was the first game series I ever became a fan of. As I got more involved in film making, the love for Mega Man carried on." In 2003, he saw a student film project of a live-action Mega Man movie trailer and was immediately inspired. Though the trailer had heart and vision, he says it wasn't as faithful to the game as it could have been. Since no one had ever made a feature-length live-action Mega Man film before, Lebron took up the challenge and set out to make the most faithful movie possible.

Script-writing for the movie began in November 2007, and Lebron spent a lot of time researching the plot, the characters, and the gameplay to make sure everything was accounted for in the film. He soon assembled a dedicated crew and a small team of actors. Shooting for the film began in early 2008 and was wrapped up that September, but it took another two years to complete the CGI and postproduction work on the film. After watching Mega Man, it's clear the effort and hard work paid off. The film is incredibly polished.

"The goal was to have as little CGI as possible but have enough to be able to tell the story and help create these characters that were physically impossible to pull off on my given budget," says Lebron. "The more humanoid robot masters were played by live-action actors, while the more complex ones were complete CGI. The rule was to do everything within our budget to see whether a certain aspect could be live action, and if it was not possible, CGI would come into play."

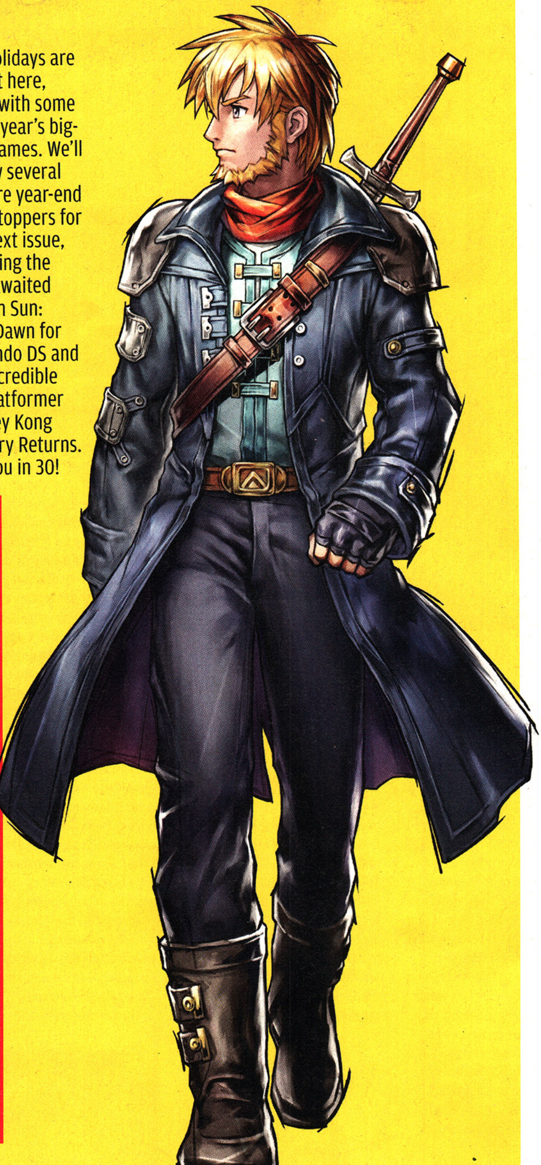
The CGI characters and special effects in the film are quite impressive, though a great deal of attention was also paid to getting the costumes and props just right for the live-action portions. Crafted by the film's producers David and Daniel Horowitz, the costumes were primarily made out of motocross gear that was retrofitted with extra items and painted. Other props are more high-tech: the power core, for instance, was molded from scratch and rigged with LED lights to make it pulsate and glow.

Lebron's faithful take on Mega Man has been met with a lot of praise from viewers, he says. While he has a lot of different projects in the works, he's considering tackling another gaming-related film. "The producers and I were playing around with the idea of one more video game-fan project," he says, "...something that will blow everything else out of the water and create a new benchmark for independent fan production." Considering the quality of his Mega Man movie, we can't wait to see what comes next. The Mega Man work can be viewed for free online at www.megamanfilm.com. **—NATHAN M.**

NEXT MONTH

HOLIDAY 2010 VOL. 262

The holidays are almost here, along with some of the year's biggest games. We'll review several surefire year-end chart-toppers for you next issue, including the long-awaited Golden Sun: Dark Dawn for Nintendo DS and the incredible Wii platformer Donkey Kong Country Returns. See you in 30!



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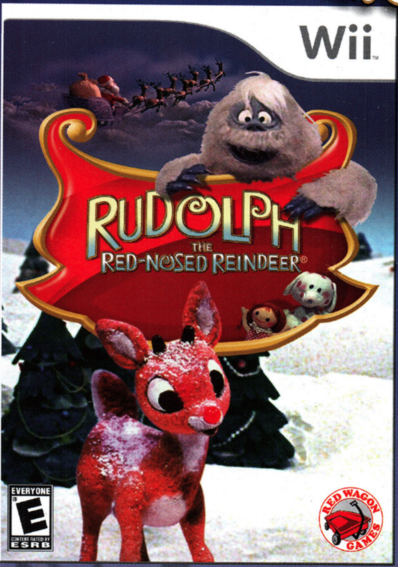
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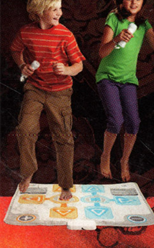

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